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Faith in Action for Social Justice

ORGANIZING: **Is There an App for That?**

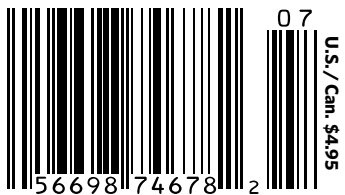
How online tools are transforming the way
social change happens.



Ashley Judd's 'bitter
and sweet' activism

Torture and the soul
of the church

Matthew 4 in the age
of climate change



PEACE WITH JUSTICE SUNDAY

"We cannot keep quiet if there is something wrong."

-Dr. Leonard Kabwita,
Jerusalem Justice and
Peace Ministry (JJPM) in the DRC

In war-torn Democratic Republic of the Congo, children as young as 8 years old are forced to work in mines to support war.

But United Methodists are trying to do something about it. Armed with a grant from the Peace with Justice Sunday offering, the Jerusalem Justice and Peace Ministry (JJPM) is assisting communities in the DRC.

STRENGTHEN.
ADVOCATE.
GIVE.



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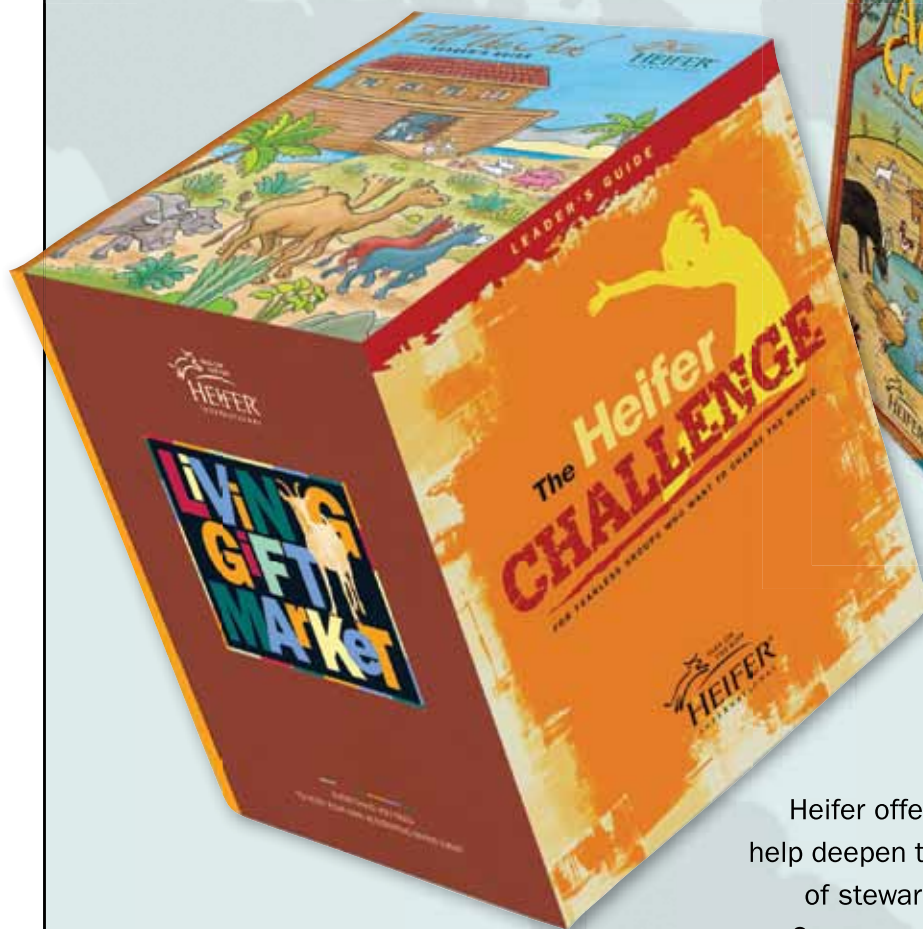
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USING ONLINE AND wireless communication to organize large, diverse groups of people has been a key component of the nonviolent Arab Spring uprisings. But these tools aren't just for deposing dictators—organizers are finding new ways to use them here in the U.S., from defending individuals under threat of deportation to spurring nationwide public rallies around key political issues. As Jeannie Choi writes in our cover feature, "A Web of Power," the best tech-savvy organizers are rooted in the same priorities that have shaped successful movements for decades—listening to, learning from, and communicating with people to mobilize them to create change.

We're finalizing this issue soon after the killing of Osama bin Laden. Some former Bush administration officials have claimed that without so-called "enhanced interrogation techniques," bin Laden never would have been found. But CIA chief Leon Panetta explained that such techniques actually provided false leads in the search for bin Laden. Writing in *The Washington Post*, torture survivor Sen. John McCain countered the Bush officials' claims and asserted the need for moral clarity when it comes to torture: "Ultimately, this is more than a utilitarian debate. This is a moral debate. It is about who we are."

The church ought to be a source for such moral clarity—but in fact many American

Christians are in favor of the use of torture. In "The Body in Pain," Robin Kirk, executive director of the Duke Human Rights Center, writes about efforts by church activists, ethicists, and leaders to educate Christians on why torture is anathema to our faith and to spur more of us to lift up a voice of conscience in the public debate.

Writing from firsthand experience of situations where torture might happen, Evan Knappenberger, a former Army intelligence analyst, meditates on the difficult path of conscience in "Stranger in a Strange Land," an essay about faith, military culture, and accused WikiLeaks source Bradley Manning. ■

Letters

REVOLUTIONARY SPIRIT

I'm rejoicing in the news from Egypt. I thought there must be nonviolent strategists at work; that the story came out so soon is a powerful tribute to Rose Marie Berger ("Nothing Spontaneous About It," May 2011). But please tell me Berger didn't write the headline. There is always something spontaneous about the work of the Holy Spirit, which "blows where it chooses" (John 3:8).

Margaret Wilde
Miami, Florida

NONVIOLENCE CLASSIC

Thank you for the excellent articles about Egypt's use of nonviolence in its successful liberation from the Mubarak regime ("The Surprising Power of Nonviolence," May 2011). If they are not already aware of it, readers may be interested in the seminal book *The Power of Nonviolence*, by Richard Gregg. Written in 1934, after Gregg spent four years with Gandhi during the foundational years of the campaign for Indian independence, the book is as relevant today as was to Martin Luther King, Jr., who wrote the foreword to a revised version in 1959.

Tom Ewell
Clinton, Washington

UNEXPECTED ALLY

The argument of "Taxes and the Common Good," by Chuck Collins (April 2011), is supported by none other than Adam Smith,

Climate change deniers are not interested in facts. They have an alternative reality, populated with rants, half-truths, and outright lies. —Joanie Gutermuth, Troy, Ohio

the "father of capitalism." Like Collins, Smith criticizes extreme concentrations of wealth. Collins advocates government regulation of speculation through taxation; Smith also argued for government regulation of banking. Collins suggests "thoughtful reductions" in Pentagon spending; Smith was caustic in his criticisms of wasteful military spending, arguing that wars always cost more than any gains they produce. Finally, Collins and Smith both advocate progressive taxation. Our society today would be stronger (as well as economically more powerful) if we listened to both Smith and Collins.

John E. Hill
Quincy, Massachusetts

LIQUID STATISTICS

Could Doug Thorpe's meaningful "Living Waters" (April 2011) have been complemented by a fact file on the injustice caused by Israel's water control? For example, according to Amnesty International, the daily water allocation for each Jewish settler in the West Bank is 80 gallons, while for each Palestinian there it is 18 gallons.

Ray Higgs
Ferntree Gully, Victoria, Australia

GENETIC ENGINEERING IDOLATRY

As an agrobiologist and faithful reader, I was disappointed that "For God So Loved the Dirt ... " by Norman Wirzba (April 2011) did not mention genetic engineering. Today, industrial agricultural crops are not designed by the God of the Bible but by new gods called genetic engineers, who work for corporations creating new life forms that could never exist in nature. These new corporate deities don't even mention God when applying for the U.S. patents on their life forms. Information about genetically engineered crops and food in the United States continues to fly under the radar of the press.

Ed Stockman
Plainfield, Massachusetts

WHEN A KISS ISN'T JUST A KISS

To quote my husband on "The Surprising Power of Nonviolence" issue (May 2011): "Best cover ever."

Wendy Holland
El Cajon, California

Letters, Sojourners, 3333 14th St. NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20010 or letters@sojo.net. Include your name, city, and state. Letters may be edited.

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THE SECOND ANNUAL RITA M. MCGINLEY SYMPOSIUM



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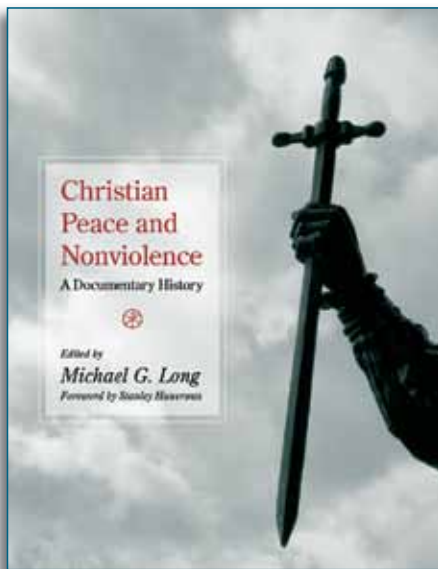
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BY JIM WALLIS

The Things that Make for Peace



WHEN A TEAM of Navy SEALs killed Osama bin Laden in May, most Americans felt a sense of relief. He was truly a dedicated purveyor of violence, a manipulator and distorter of religion for political purposes, and a man responsible for the deaths of thousands of innocent people. Nevertheless, it is never a Christian response to celebrate the death of any human being, as many did, even one so given over to evil. Violence is always an indication of our failure to resolve our conflicts by peaceful means and an occasion for deeper reflection.

The Bible takes evil seriously and clearly says that evildoers should be held accountable for their deeds, and that the state has the legitimate role of bringing to justice those who perpetrate terrible crimes. Osama bin Laden was perhaps the most recognizable face of terrorism in our time. But killing him has certainly not

justice, rather than just another act of war. Bin Laden was not a casualty of bombing raids or drone attacks; instead, his death was the result of long and careful intelligence, good detective work, and a laser-like focus on the man most responsible for 9/11. It showed the effectiveness of these “policing activities” compared to the endless wars of occupation that have proven so ineffective and costly in human and financial terms.

The completion of the largest manhunt in history could be a turning point to completely rethink our response to terrorism. The threats of terrorists are still real, but it is increasingly clear that full-scale military action is not the most effective response. There is no more room for excuses. The war in Afghanistan—now the longest war in U.S. history—no longer has any moral, financial, or strategic justification. Christians, along with other people of good moral sense, must lead the effort to finally end this war and bring the troops home.

The death of bin Laden must also become a pivotal moment of reflection. The violence of terrorism, the violence of war, and even violent reprisal should push us to deeper reflection, and even repentance, for how we have allowed the seeds of such destruction to take root and grow in our hearts and in our world.

How do we best respond to evil and those who perpetrate it? What have we learned in the last 10 years about what is the best answer to the violence of terrorism? How do we change the conditions and grievances that allow terrorists to pull others into their agenda? In this fallen world we are often faced with imperfect choices in response to the clear dangers of evil. Religious

wisdom always has us look also at ourselves and what opportunities we have to be makers of peace. The death of bin Laden could be a critical moment in our efforts to resist evil and seek good and to turn away from the logic of both terrorism and war.

Even before the Navy SEALs found him, it was already becoming clear that bin Laden was losing. The Arab Spring of young Arabs and Muslims working through nonviolent democratic movements has been, in part, a repudiation of bin Laden’s radical terrorist agenda. We can be hopeful that the face of the Arab world might now become the young nonviolent activists for democracy, rather than the self-righteous smirk of a self-promoting video character who tells us he is going to kill our children if we don’t submit to his hateful agenda.

As long as bin Laden remained at large and able to launch his hateful rhetoric, we seemed stuck in failed wars as our best response to terrorism. But perhaps with him now gone and rendered irrelevant, we can turn the page on the 10-year trauma of 9/11 and find better ways to settle our conflicts, defend ourselves, and undermine the threats against peace.

What must be said, especially as we now approach the 10th anniversary of 9/11, is that America is not, nor has it ever been, at war with Islam or the Muslim world. As many have pointed out, many of the victims of bin Laden and the al Qaeda network have been Muslims, both in the U.S. and around the world. It is time to unite our many faiths around a serious strategy to learn again together, as the Bible says, to find the things “that make for peace.” ■

Jim Wallis is editor-in-chief of Sojourners.

In this fallen world we are often faced with imperfect choices in response to clear evil.

ended the threat of terrorism. And it also did not vindicate the decade of war, the tragic U.S. response to the attacks on 9/11 that has resulted in thousands of other innocent casualties in both Afghanistan and Iraq.

More innocent civilians have become the “collateral damage” of our wars on terrorism than those who suffered the direct assault on civilians by bin Laden’s al Qaeda assassins on Sept. 11. This fact is a grave moral failing by the standards of just war theory, which is at least given lip service in most churches.

Indeed, one of the biggest problems of war is how indiscriminate it is. And it is worth noting that the Special Forces action that resulted in the death of bin Laden was a focused effort to bring one perpetrator to

REUTERS/Mohammed Salem



Third War

In Benghazi, a Libyan woman walks by photos of people killed during the civil war and NATO-led aerial attacks against Moammar Gadhafi. "I am not afraid of the bombs, but rather the inability to try and dialogue to find a peaceful solution," said Tripoli's Roman Catholic Bishop Giovanni Martinelli.

By Elizabeth Palmberg

The Safety Net Frays

Morally and economically, it's wrong for federal budget makers to go after the poor.

IN THE PAST two years, the social safety net has helped more Americans than any time in a generation. So why are so many people trying to tear it to shreds?

The recession brought on by Wall Street's casino speculation has pounded Main Street hard; unemployment has hovered near double digits for two years. Ordinary people are searching for jobs day after day, week after week. At a national hiring day in April, McDonald's got more than a million job applicants, and rejected more than nine-tenths of them.

The House of Representatives' budget, which would cut Medicare, Medicaid, food stamps, foreign food aid, health-care reform, and unemployment benefits—while sparing military spending and giving tax breaks to wealthy corporations and individuals—would be a moral disaster for every American. It's clear (even to rampaging liberals such as the economists at Goldman Sachs) that the proposed federal budget cuts would be a drag on the economy as it digs out of the hole caused by the recession.

During the Bush years, Congress handed

out big tax breaks to the rich—cuts that originally had an expiration date so legislators could avoid talking about their long-range budget folly. Congress and the Bush administration also green-lighted a \$1.2 trillion bender of unneeded wars, a splurge that will

It's worth mentioning that, when the U.S. is not in a recession, the Federal Reserve intentionally aims to keep unemployment above a certain level, in order to fend off excessive inflation. You read that right: The government makes sure that at least 3 to 5

The GOP budget is a moral disaster.

keep on spending, due to our responsibilities to veterans.

Now Congress is shocked—shocked!—to discover that deficit spending has been going on, and is pointing fingers at the scapegoats that seem least likely to fight back. Introducing his slash-and-burn budget, Rep. Paul Ryan predicted that without such gutting, America's safety net was in danger of becoming "a hammock." A *hammock*? News flash: This is mass unemployment, not a siesta. Food stamps, for example, are a safety net that people use for a limited period—nine months, on average—to feed their families while they get through what is often the worst economic time of their lives.

percent of Americans seeking work at any given time are unemployed. It's not necessarily crazy for it to do this, but it is crazy to scapegoat the poor afterward.

This is particularly true because, for three decades in the U.S., the rich have been getting richer and the poor poorer. This is no accident; it's from years of trade agreements that ship working-class jobs overseas, government policies that let union-busting employers break the law with only a slap on the wrist, and tax and contracting giveaways to big business. Redistribution? You're soaking in it—the kind of redistribution that shifts still more wealth to the wealthiest. The House's proposed budget is just the latest and

Our Mission

The mission of *Sojourners* magazine is to inspire hope and action by articulating the biblical call to racial and social justice, life and peace, and environmental stewardship.

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most shameless installment.

Last year, Manhattan hedge fund manager John Paulson took home \$4.9 billion in pay. Before the crash, Paulson helped inflate the housing bubble by designing junk mortgage-backed securities for Goldman Sachs—and then profited from the pop by betting that those very securities would fail. Yet instead of being run out of business, last year he made about a billion and a half more than the federal food stamp program spent in all of New York City.

The economic evidence is clear: Inequality this stark kills jobs. When people in the middle and working class make a decent income, their purchases fuel the real economy. When all the wealth is pumped to

the top few percent, they pour money into dangerously volatile speculation.

The moral evidence is clear: It's wrong to make false implications that people are poor and unemployed because they are shiftless, and that the level of national shiftlessness inexplicably doubled about the time the housing bubble popped. And it's wrong to intentionally target the most vulnerable in society. None of us knows when we might need that social safety net—and all of us are lessened when we yank it out from beneath our fellow human beings. ■

Elizabeth Palmberg is an associate editor of Sojourners.

By Gimena Sánchez-Garzoli

Undelivered Promises

A U.S.-Colombia trade pact would not address, and might even reward, paramilitary violence.

FOR THE PAST five years, Colombia's abysmal labor rights record has led congressional Democrats to freeze the proposed U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement (TPA). And for good reason: The agreement would, in part, benefit large-scale monocropping plantations and other economic projects—many of whose owners utilize the “security” services of paramilitary groups to intimidate, assassinate, and displace not only trade unionists, but also Afro-Colombian and indigenous leaders and families viewed as getting in the way of economic operations' owners.

In April, President Obama and Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos defrosted the trade agreement, announcing a “Labor Action Plan” that details steps Colombia has committed to take in the coming months. Based on these promises, the TPA is likely to come up for a vote in the U.S. Congress before the end of 2011.

But the plan—according to U.S. and Colombian trade unions, human rights groups, Afro-Colombians, indigenous Colombians, and rural farmer associations—falls short. Far from guaranteeing fair and safe conditions for Colombian workers, the plan limits their ability to exercise their rights and ignores serious concerns about

security, human rights, and Afro-Colombian and indigenous land rights.

In Colombia, being a trade unionist can be a death sentence. Colombia has the highest number of unionists killed in the world—more than 1,000 during the last 10 years. Most workers are not unionized. A large number of workers are forced into “associative cooperatives” that then contract with employers; these not only impede unionization, but they also result in workers not having the labor protections that are afforded to direct employees. In the sugarcane industry in Valle del Cauca, where this model operates, Afro-Colombians work in slavery-like conditions.

Beyond labor rights, the announced plan also ignores the fact that, in Colombia, many large-scale “development” projects, including plantations of monoculture crops such as oil palm trees, have been illegally and violently imposed onto land belonging to Afro-Colombians and indigenous communities.

With 5.2 million internally displaced persons, Colombia competes with Sudan for the slot of largest internally displaced population in the world. In multiple rulings, Colombia's own Constitutional Court has highlighted the connection between large-scale monoculture agriculture, paramilitary violence,

From the Archives

July-August 1976

A Warning Cry

I SPEAK TO you as a pastor who feels an obligation to give a warning cry. There is an instinct for defense and security for communities as well as for individuals. But in the name of truth, I must alert you to a new specter covering Latin America, threatening its very identity. This is the specter of national security in the name of anti-communism.

Many Latin Americans were at the side of those who fought against Nazism. But now, in the fight against communism, national security is reviving that same Nazism. Regimes in Latin America tend to place themselves above and outside the law, which then absolutizes and deifies those very regimes. In the fight against communist totalitarianism, they do not hesitate to utilize methods that are completely Nazi. These methods include invasion of the most fundamental privacy, a climate of suspicion and denunciation, kidnappings, torture, death, defense of private property without even a minimal concern to extend private property rights for all ... Any political organization or legitimate process of raising social awareness outside of government control is considered to be subversion or communism. Trade unions and cooperatives are manipulated, political parties have no autonomy. Thus, the parliamentary system and democratic processes are paralyzed. While there is a concern for maintaining the appearances of democracy, the content and meaning of democracy have been stifled. ■

Dom Helder Camara was Catholic archbishop of Recife Olinda, Brazil, when this article appeared.



and displacement of Afro-Colombians and indigenous Colombians from their homes.

The underlying conditions that cause much of the violence—the internal armed conflict and paramilitaries that operate with impunity—are not addressed in the labor action plan agreed to in April. In that plan, Colombia commits to long-overdue steps, such as expanding protection programs for trade unionists and hiring 100 labor inspectors this year to address abuses in sugar, oil palms, ports, and mining cooperatives. But these steps do not go far enough. The plan does not require any decrease in violence against trade union members, or any progress toward justice for those already hurt or killed; it also does not deal with other important labor issues, such as allowing for industry-wide unions.

For five years, U.S. and Colombia labor movements and human rights organizations, as well as U.S. Democrats, have pressured

Colombia to make these changes, yet little has been done. Given Colombia's poor track record on other human rights issues, it is unlikely it will fundamentally change its current dismal labor environment by the end of the year.

Colombia has a long history of undeclared promises with regard to labor and human rights. Its Constitutional Court has issued orders urging Colombia to take action to protect ethnic minorities from further harm, but the country has not done so. If Colombia ignores directives from its own judicial system to protect the rights of those who would be impacted by the TPA, what reason is there to believe it will guarantee the rights of its own workers with the Labor Action Plan? ■

Gimena Sánchez-Garzoli is a senior associate for the Andes at the Washington Office on Latin America.

By Lyndsay Moseley

We Have the Technology

Off-the-shelf renewable power can meet 100 percent of world need—if we have the will.

RENEWABLE ENERGY PACKS a powerful punch. More solar energy hits the Earth's surface in one hour than is used by the entire global energy system in a year. In the U.S., Great Plains and East Coast off-shore wind

and land." Making the dramatic transition to using only such technology, they suggest, would require a combination of strategic policies and massively ramped-up manufacturing along the lines of retooling the auto sector to

The greatest obstacle is not technological or even economic, but social and political.

could provide enough energy to meet the entire country's need. As nations seek ways to address energy security, air pollution, and climate change, they look to renewable resources such as solar, wind, and geothermal.

Now, researchers Mark Jacobson of Stanford and Mark Delucchi of U.C. Davis have calculated that it is possible to meet 100 percent of world energy demand using only energy from clean sources by 2050. They say we can do it—and, what's more, we can do it using only off-the-shelf technology.

Jacobson and Delucchi did their projections based on only existing technologies that have no climate-disrupting-emissions and "low impacts on wildlife, water pollution,

produce aircraft during World War II, only much bigger. Other studies, most famously by Robert Socolow and Stephen Pacala, have shown similar results.

Take wind energy, for example. Jacobson and Delucchi's vision calls for production of approximately 3.8 million five-megawatt wind turbines to supply 50 percent of global power demand. They envision a similar scenario for various types of solar, and the rest from geothermal, wave, tidal, and hydro-power.

And let's not forget transportation. Jacobson and Delucchi assert that this oil-dependent sector could be replaced by renewable electricity or hydrogen. To smooth out differences in supply and demand, they

suggest a few key management practices, including decentralized storage, updating the transmission system, and combining wind and solar to offset their intermittent nature.

What's the greatest obstacle to realizing their vision? According to Jacobson and Delucchi, it is not technological or even economic, but social and political. As they point out, "current energy markets, institutions, and policies have been developed to support the production and use of fossil fuels."

Some countries are making great strides, though. More than 100 countries have adopted policies to spur expansion of renewable energy. Germany is expected to generate nearly 40 percent of its electricity from renewable energy by 2020. In 2009, for the second year in a row, both the United States and Europe added more new electric power from renewables than from conventional sources such as coal—but a federal clean-energy program is necessary to take it to the next level.

Clean-energy advocates in the U.S. have prioritized the goals of required renewable energy targets, energy efficiency measures, and an end to the \$10 billion in U.S. subsidies to dirty fuels, but these policies are up against relentless opposition from those who benefit from the status quo. If demand remains steady, policies to systematically shutter old, polluting power plants are essential to creating a strong market for clean energy.

As costs come down for renewables, we are waking up to the true costs of dependence on dirty energy: how it leaves our lives and communities in ruins. From extraction to combustion to waste disposal, hidden costs burden society in the form of health problems, irreversible environmental damage, and even premature death. Harvard Medical School analysts say coal alone generates as much as \$523 billion per year in burdens to society, which is more than twice the total amount of electric utility revenue in 2009.

While experts will debate the details, the important message is that yes, we can break free from dirty energy sources of the past—and we must move quickly. Success will require leadership, vision, and commitment to our health, security, and the future of the planet. ■

Lyndsay Moseley is a federal policy representative with Sierra Club's Beyond Coal campaign.

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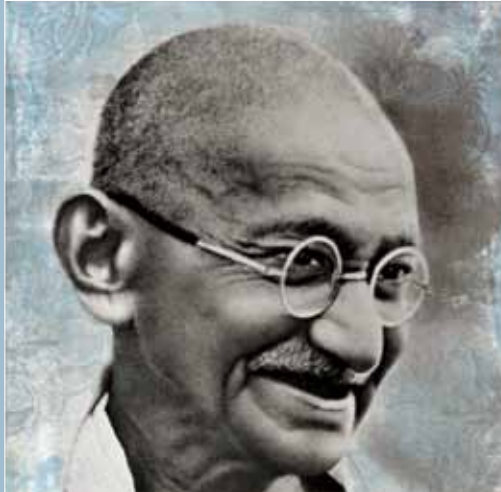
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A Stand for Freedom

IN JULY, AS Americans we celebrate our freedom. It's a word and a concept that many of us toss about without much thought, but on the occasion of the independence hard-won by the United States some 235 years ago, perhaps it is appropriate to give it closer inspection.

Freedom means the "absence of necessity, coercion, or constraint in choice or action," according to Merriam-Webster. It also connotes the ability to speak frankly and honestly, a certain boldness, and a political right. I would argue that it is moreover a spiritual right, inalienable and God-given.

Not unlike the Jewish celebration of Passover, which commemorates God's deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt—the Hebrew word for which means "narrow place"—on Independence Day we remember our country's deliverance from the clutches of tyranny's oppressive fist. Still, there are myriad things, personally and institution-

those wrestling with their sexuality, it can feel more like a gulag than the promised land. By and large, evangelical Christianity as a culture is not the most welcoming place for gays and lesbians. Wheaton, historically at least, is no different.

Still, much has changed in the 20 years since I was an undergraduate at the self-styled Harvard of Christian schools. The "pledge" I was required to sign—promising not to engage in activities such as drinking alcohol, smoking, gambling, having sexual relations outside of marriage, and social dancing (square was okay, dirty was not)—has been replaced by a "covenant." Students and faculty are now more or less free to dance—and even, on occasion and under certain circumstances, enjoy a social drink harder than iced tea.

But the school's take on sexual behavior remains unchanged.

In keeping with traditional Christian morals and ethics, sex outside of marriage (defined as a union between one man and one woman) remains *verboten*. While students today are less likely to vilify lesbians and gays out of hand and more likely to exchange in free discourse about the issues surrounding homosexuality, the culture at Wheaton falls far short of welcoming and affirming.

The year before I enrolled at Wheaton, a gay student from my home state of Connecticut, who was struggling mightily to reconcile his sexuality with his faith and the campus community, gave up the fight. He stepped



in front of a train. The specter of that tragedy still looms vividly in the hearts and minds of many of my college friends. So when a spate of suicides by gay and lesbian young people recently made national headlines, a number of alumni—gay and straight—decided it was time to speak out.

The deepest desire of members of One Wheaton (www.onewheaton.com) is that current students know they are loved—by us and by God—precisely for who they are. They are valuable, beautiful, and precious. Life, as fraught as it may seem now, will get better. They will find love. They will find more than just acceptance. And they are not alone.

Our aim is not to engage in psychological, cultural, or theological debate about homosexuality. Nor is it our goal to be right. We simply want to love them. Powerfully, without caveat, and as a unified voice.

To its credit, the administration at Wheaton, under the leadership of new president Philip Ryken, greeted our efforts with ample grace. While it restated the school's institutional and moral stand on homosexuality, it saw our efforts to take a public stand for love for what they are.

This Independence Day, may we all remember that there is no true independence without interdependence. And may we recall the words of Martin Luther King Jr. who said, "None of us is free until all of us are free." ■

Cathleen Falsani is author of *The Dude Abides: The Gospel According to the Coen Brothers*.



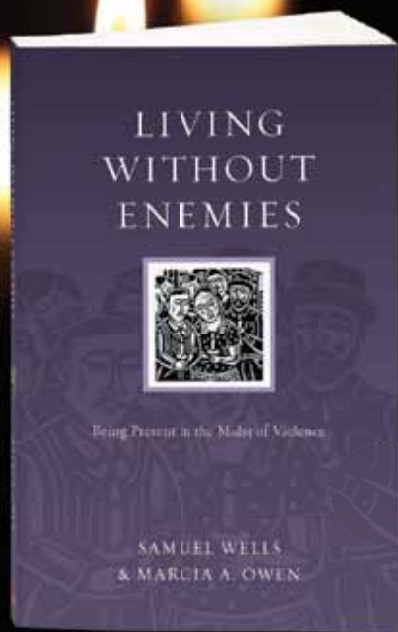
"None of us is free until all of us are free."

ally, that threaten to keep us bound in narrow places of fear and human-made judgment from which God is ever ready to rescue us.

Earlier this year, a group of alumni from my alma mater, Wheaton College in Illinois, took a bold stand for freedom and justice when they launched One Wheaton, an organization dedicated to showing solidarity and love for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender students at the institution whose motto boasts that it is "For Christ and His Kingdom."

While in the evangelical Christian milieu Wheaton is hardly the most conservative and clamped down of places, for gay students and

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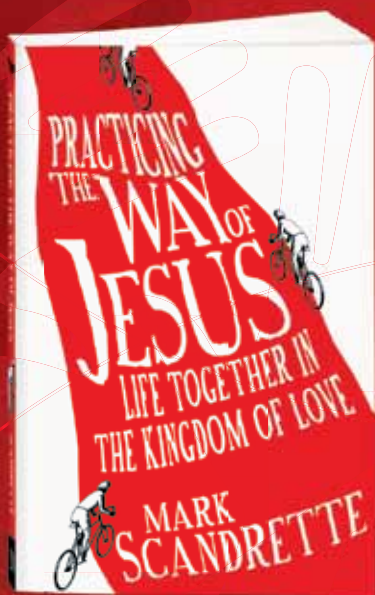


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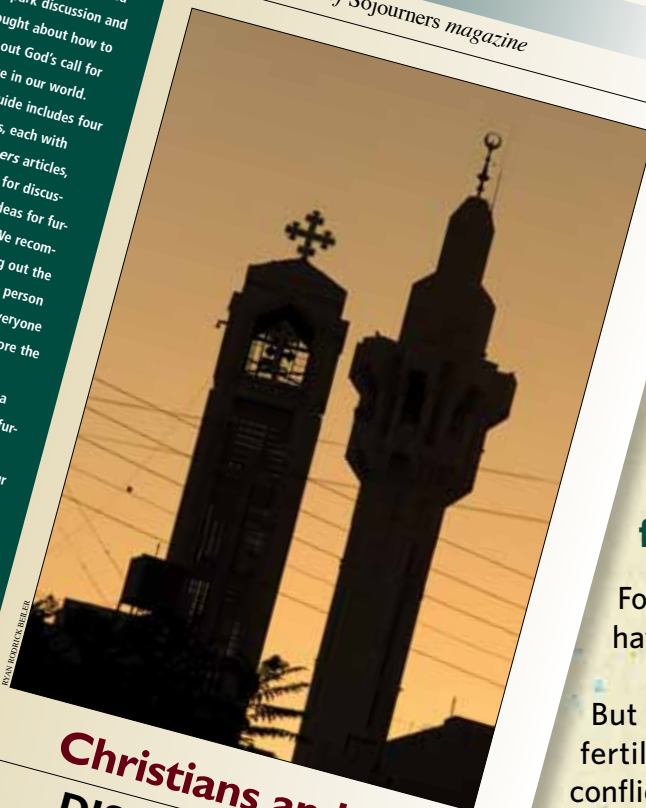
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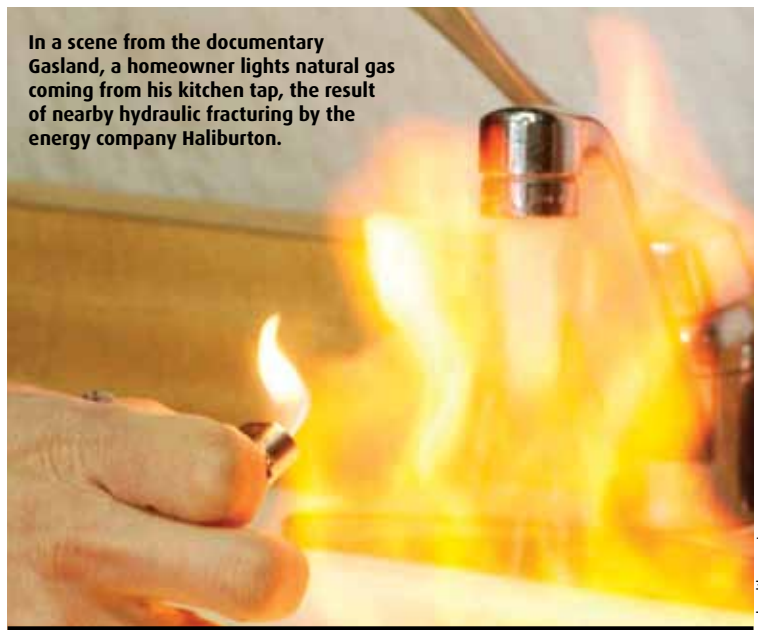
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—Barry Rands
Morro Bay, California

The New Ugliest Word

I THINK I know the ugliest word in the English language—a neologism, actually, coined to describe the technique for pumping liquid at high pressure into rock to open up cracks so that natural gas will flow. It's called hydraulic fracturing, shortened by engineers to hydrofracking and by everyone else to fracking.

And here's the thing: When first we heard of it, many of us environmentalists were very hopeful. Natural gas, you see, is cleaner than coal. When you burn it, you release about half as much carbon into the atmosphere. So, faced with the greatest problem the planet has ever faced—global warming—there was widespread hope that the new supplies of natural gas the technique might unlock would serve as a “bridge fuel” that would fill in for coal and let us take a little more time developing renewable energy. The gas companies were even more thrilled—they calculated that there were trillions of cubic feet of gas



In a scene from the documentary *Gasland*, a homeowner lights natural gas coming from his kitchen tap, the result of nearby hydraulic fracturing by the energy company Haliburton.

gaslandthemovie.com

West Virginia, for instance, a golden algae killed nearly every fish in one creek—an algae that normally only shows up in ocean estuaries. Industry spread money to cash-strapped communities. Soon Pennsylvania was leasing its state forests, and even its state parks may not be safe. Opponents were outspent, but strong organizing continues. Groups such as ShaleShock and Catskill Mountainkeeper have managed to win temporary moratoriums on the practice in New York.

The more we've learned about fracking, though, the clearer it's become that its damage is not confined to the local area. When you fracture the rock to make the gas flow faster, most of it is captured by the pump at the surface. But some escapes (the documentary *Gasland* had a remarkable shot of homeowners lighting a gas fire by holding a match under their water tap). And unburned natural gas or methane (CH₄ to you chemists) is an even stronger greenhouse gas than CO₂.

In other words, if more than 1 or 2 percent of the natural gas escapes straight into the atmosphere, this process would cause more global warming than burning coal.

And that's what appears to be happening. The first real study of the subject—by a team at Cornell University in New York—showed that even in the best case fracking would provide only “marginal” improvement over coal and that at the moment it appears to be worse.

In other words, the bridge to the energy future is a rickety pier that just stretches out into the deep water and then stops. It's one more dodge, of the kind junkies specialize in, a way to keep from coming to terms with our addiction to fossil fuel. Forget the bridge—we need to screw up our resolve and leap across the chasm to the real future of wind and sun. Not simple, not cheap, but not avoidable either.

In the meantime, we've got a new curse word. ■

Bill McKibben, author of *The End of Nature*, is founder of 350.org.



Fracking is just one more way to keep from coming to terms with our addiction to fossil fuel.

underneath American soil, particularly in the Marcellus Shale, which stretches along the Appalachians.

But it didn't take long to figure out that fracking came with trouble attached. Stories spread of companies buying up drilling rights for a tiny fraction of what they were worth, and of big concrete drilling pads displacing field and forest up and down the interior East. And the millions of gallons of fluid that the drillers injected to fracture the deep rock? It was soon overwhelming sewage treatment plants, contaminating aquifers, wrecking rivers. Often it turns streams to brine. In



Online tools can bring millions to the streets,
clamoring for justice.

A WEB OF POWER

How online tools are transforming the way social change happens.

ON JAN. 1, 2010, a group of four undocumented students embarked on the Trail of Dreams, a 1,500-mile march from Miami to Washington, D.C., to call for passage of the Dream Act, a pathway to citizenship for undocumented students who serve in the military or attend college. At the end of their first day of walking, a member of the team tweeted a message to the group's few Twitter followers: "VERY TIRED at the end of this first day, but going to bed with a smile and fully inspired."

Because their Twitter stream is synched to their Facebook page, they immediately received responses of empathy and encouragement on their Facebook wall. "It's worth the work ... long way to go but y'all are not alone," wrote Elder Eduardo Canul Montero. "We are with you and we thank you!" said Deborah De Santos. And Naomi Florentino-B offered: "As a Dreamer, it hurts too much not to be with you during this walk. However, in prayers and spirit, my support follows your steps. Be strong."

Gaby Pacheco, one of the Trail of Dreams marchers, says the online followers were an incredible source of strength. "They walked with us every step of the way," Pacheco says. But Twitter and Facebook were more than just lifelines to family, friends, and supporters; they were also strategic online organizing tools. By the end of their journey, Trail of Dreams had more than 6,600 Facebook fans and 1,500 Twitter followers. With a single tweet or Facebook post, thousands of co-activists could be called upon to contact their members of Congress, attend rallies, sign petitions, and circulate emails. This made a huge difference, according to Pacheco.



"These online tools really woke up the sleeping giants."

"Even though the Dream Act didn't pass, last year was one of the most successful years for the immigrant rights movement, and I believe these online tools really woke up the sleeping giants," Pacheco told *Sojourners*. "Through Twitter, Facebook, blog posts, and websites, students were able to share their stories that the media were not portraying."

Some critics are concerned that online organizing promotes "click activism" rather than the relationships and community-building necessary for effective social change. Author and social commentator Malcolm Gladwell famously argued last year in *The New Yorker*, "Facebook activism succeeds not by motivating people to make a real sacrifice but by motivating them to do the things that people do when they are not motivated enough to make a real sacrifice." But events in Egypt and elsewhere have shown that online tools can bring millions to the streets, clamoring for justice.

Even today, Pacheco and many other immigration activists continue their work with online tools, notably stopping numerous deportations of young undocumented immigrants who would be eligible for citizenship under the Dream Act. Dream activists, then, have joined a growing cadre of online organizers who are using the web with great success to enhance traditional organizing methods, proving that online tools aren't just for socializing anymore—they're creating actual social and political change.



THE STRATEGIES

So how do online organizers do it? To outsiders, they can seem like an elusive club of Internet whiz kids, but the truth is that many of them come from traditional organizing backgrounds and cite classic gurus such as Marshall Ganz as the touchstones of their methodology. And at the center of any organizing strategy are people, says Michael Sherrard, an organizer for MoveOn's political action wing.

"Organizing is about people power, and organizers, whether online or offline, must listen and pay attention to what people are excited and passionate about," Sherrard says. MoveOn is a progressive political action group with more than 5 million members. Despite its huge political capacity, Sherrard

says that the first step of every MoveOn campaign is getting input from its members.

Matt Stempeck, the new media project manager for the New Organizing Institute Education Fund, a training institute for online organizers, marvels at MoveOn's unwavering commitment to listening to its members. "Online organizers have to have their finger on the pulse of what your members really feel," Stempeck says.

Once an advocacy group has received sufficient feedback from its constituents and has identified a campaign goal, it then picks an online messaging medium that best fits the desired outcome of the campaign—email, Twitter, Facebook, or texting. The four media, with their different methods of getting out the word, are effective in fulfilling distinctive campaign objectives.



THE METHODS

MoveOn's most powerful tool is its email list, which was effective earlier this year when Gov. Scott Walker of Wisconsin attempted to strip public employees of their collective bargaining rights. "Wisconsin was a great success because it was a moment where we saw huge passion and influence from progressives and from our members," Sherrard says. MoveOn's goal was to get rallies in every state capital across the country in a show of solidarity. Once MoveOn identified that its constituents were passionate about the issue, the group sent emails to its most committed and active members, encouraging them to organize rallies. Within a week, activists pulled together more than 60 demonstrations.

Other email messages include petitions that members can sign and send to their members of Congress, news organizations, or corporations. When inboxes are flooded with thousands of emails relaying the same message, people notice.

To send a high volume of messages to a campaign target in a public way, online organizers often employ Twitter, the 140-character microblogging service, which allows users to send their own brief note to other users who sign up to follow their Twitter streams. All Twitter users have followers and are following other users, creating a massive online social network of idea sharing and link swapping.

Every time users log on to Twitter, they can see a list of their own tweets, any tweets that mention them, and any tweets that are sent by the users they follow. News on Twitter travels at lightning speed, allowing organizers to disseminate messages in real time with great results. Organizers have learned to use Twitter to grow and connect with their constituency, as did the Trail of Dreams walkers, and to strategically communicate with campaign targets, whether they are high-profile people, media groups, corporations, or congressional offices. "Twitter has real implications for reaching elite audiences," explains Sherrard. "You can get the attention of decision-makers and media figures on Twitter in a way that you can't by just sending them an email."

America's Voice, a rapid-response immigration reform organization, often uses Twitter to let people know about important news stories of abuse against undocumented immigrants. It also uses Twitter to publicly send messages about immigration reform to people in power. Many of the tweets on America's Voice Twitter stream are aimed at President Obama, with messages such as "@BarackObama Grant administrative relief to #DreamAct students? Yes, you can," and "@BarackObama it's time to make good on your promise to promising young Dreamers."

These are not just notable quotations for their constituents to retweet, though that is certainly a goal. These are also ways to get the attention of the Obama administration in a very public way. "Twitter is excellent for targeting people," explains Matt Hildreth, online organizer for America's Voice. "You can put issues in front of politicians very easily." Patty Kupfer, the managing director of America's Voice, also notes that Twitter is powerful because of the volume of messages that can be sent within minutes. The Dream activists, for example, used Twitter strategically to flood the inboxes of local Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) employees with tweets about specific detainees ICE had in custody. "These young Dream activists have revolutionized the immigrant rights movement both politically and tactically," Kupfer

says. "Because they are so savvy online, that's where the movement is happening."

Twitter can also have a coalition and community-building element to it because it allows an organization to drive traffic from its Twitter stream to its web page. "Organizations can and should send links to their blog posts out on their Twitter streams," says Matt Stempeck. "Organizations that are good at being personable and tweeting a decent amount of times throughout the day can grow their list of followers and supporters tremendously." Both Twitter and Facebook, the third medium for online organizers, are excellent at driving web traffic to organization pages, Stempeck says. Facebook differs from Twitter, however, because of its ability to foster a sense of community on an organizational page. "Facebook is a great way to accrue supporters who might never fill out an email form, but will post your Facebook content on their own homepage and help build your support list," Stempeck explains. "You don't own their data, but you have a chance to show them information." By fostering a connection with their members through frequent, personable Facebook posts, organizations can easily connect to a widening network of people, since every Facebook fan has her own network

Organizers, whether online or offline, must pay attention to what people are passionate about.



Despite these online communication tools, change still happens on a person-to-person level.

of “friends” she can reach out to with any given message.

Short Message Service (SMS)—that is, text messages to cell phones—is a relatively new tactic for online organizers, and is most helpful for reaching people who live on the other side of the digital divide, many of whom do not have access to broadband Internet connections. Because cell phones are easier to afford than high-speed Internet, text message organizing often reaches those who lack the economic status to have a voice in the political process, on- and offline. “You can’t send extensive conversational emails [through SMS], but you save text messaging for special, critical events,” Stempeck advises. When the Trail of Dreams activists traveled through a town, they would encourage supporters to text the word “trail” or “camino” to sign up for Trail of Dreams updates via text message. When the Dream Act was up for a vote in the Senate, Pacheco sent text messages to these people urging them to flood their members of Congress with phone calls and emails. “If it wasn’t for text messaging, many people would have been disconnected. But we could tell them what was happening through text, and people would text us messages in reply,” Pacheco says.



ONLINE ORGANIZING AT THE GRASSROOTS

While some people balk at the complexity of these methods, the underlying premise of each medium is to provide opportunities for user-based innovation. Given the volume of messages and campaigns they run, online organizing groups have surprisingly small staffs. (America’s Voice, for example, has only 11 full-time staff members.) Thus, online organizing can be used by smaller, local organizations, churches, and even individuals with great results.

In November 2009, Bernard Pastor, an 18-year-old undocumented student in Ohio, was stopped by police for a minor traffic violation and detained. ICE held Pastor in federal detention with plans to deport him to his native Guatemala, though his parents had left Guatemala with Pastor when he was 3 years old. When Pastor’s friends discovered that he was in detention,

they created a Facebook page titled “Free Bernard Pastor.”

“That page became a catalyst for information, and the local media started getting involved as that Facebook page blew up,” says Troy Jackson, senior pastor at University Christian Church in Cincinnati and a local community organizer. As soon as Jackson heard Pastor’s story, he also created a simple website, PrayForBernard.com. The local faith community and Pastor’s classmates added to the content on both sites, and eventually Pastor’s story was picked up by local and national media.

In December, friends and community members gathered in support at the Morrow County jail, where Pastor was being held, joined by the media, and soon Pastor was released from jail. While he still has a pending deportation order, Pastor’s case was “moved to the bottom of the stack,” Jackson says. Though the online campaign was small, with only a few hundred supporters, Jackson believes that the Facebook page and website changed the narrative in Pastor’s favor. “The reality is that online social networks become a tool for organizers that help them to further the real relationships and organizing they are already doing,” Jackson explains. “Bernard’s classmates are 17, 18, 19 years old, but they were able to create a site that was very significant, and while the power of social change is always going to demand more than a ‘like’ button, I look at the Dreamers, and I see folks who are incredibly committed and use social media to grow their base, to stay connected, and to encourage one another.”

Online organizers would say the same: Despite these online communication tools, the key work of change continues to operate on a person-to-person level, because relationships are how people make real change happen. In the classic organizing model, a community articulates an injustice and then spreads the message of that injustice so collective action can be taken. Today, social media tools, when used well, can disseminate these messages quickly on platforms that cross boundaries of age, gender, race, and economic status, making online organizing an effective method for gathering, inspiring, and translating collective power into common solutions. ■

Jeannie Choi is web editor at Sojourners.

WWWired for Freedom

An activist in Phoenix launches a website—and supports a revolution on the other side of the world.

WHEN POLITICAL UPRISINGS began in Yemen in January to drive out Ali Abdullah Saleh from his 33-year dictatorship, Ahlam Said, a Yemeni-American activist, wondered what role she could play in the movement. At the time, Said was living in Phoenix and working as an online organizer for Promise Arizona, an immigration reform group. As she looked online for trustworthy websites and news sources on the demonstrations happening in Yemen, she came up short. “Unlike Egypt, there wasn’t a clear bridge between the Yemenis and the Americans,” Said explains. That’s when she decided to partner with a friend living in Yemen to create their own website for the movement: Yemenis4justice.com.



Online activist Ahlam Said

Begun as a “Yemen 101” website that simply aggregated news stories in English and Arabic, Yemenis4justice.com has now evolved into an open source community of online and offline organizers and activists in Yemen and the United States. The website includes an interactive Google map where users can plot recent uprisings by location and attach live video footage; an open source Excel spread sheet tracking all deaths related to the revolutions; a synchronized Twitter stream that aggregates all Yemeni and American activists and reporters;

practical guides for protesters; and videos, photos, and blogs from other Yemeni activists.

Said told *Sojourners* that she was surprised by the growth of the website. “It’s been phenomenal,” she says, “because I’m not [in Yemen], but I’m leveraging the power that I have online to communicate with activists on the ground and help them communicate to a public that they might not

Everyday people no longer depend on media outlets to know what’s going on.

have had full access to in the past.” She believes the Web, with its endless space for creativity and diversity, empowers individuals to “have their own voice” in ways never before possible. Realms of social activism and communication that were exclusive to politicians and diplomats are now accessible to any individual. “Everyday people are no longer depending on media outlets to know what’s going on. They’re taking part in the revolution,” Said explains. “They are now media outlets on their own, and they’re shaping their future at the same time.”

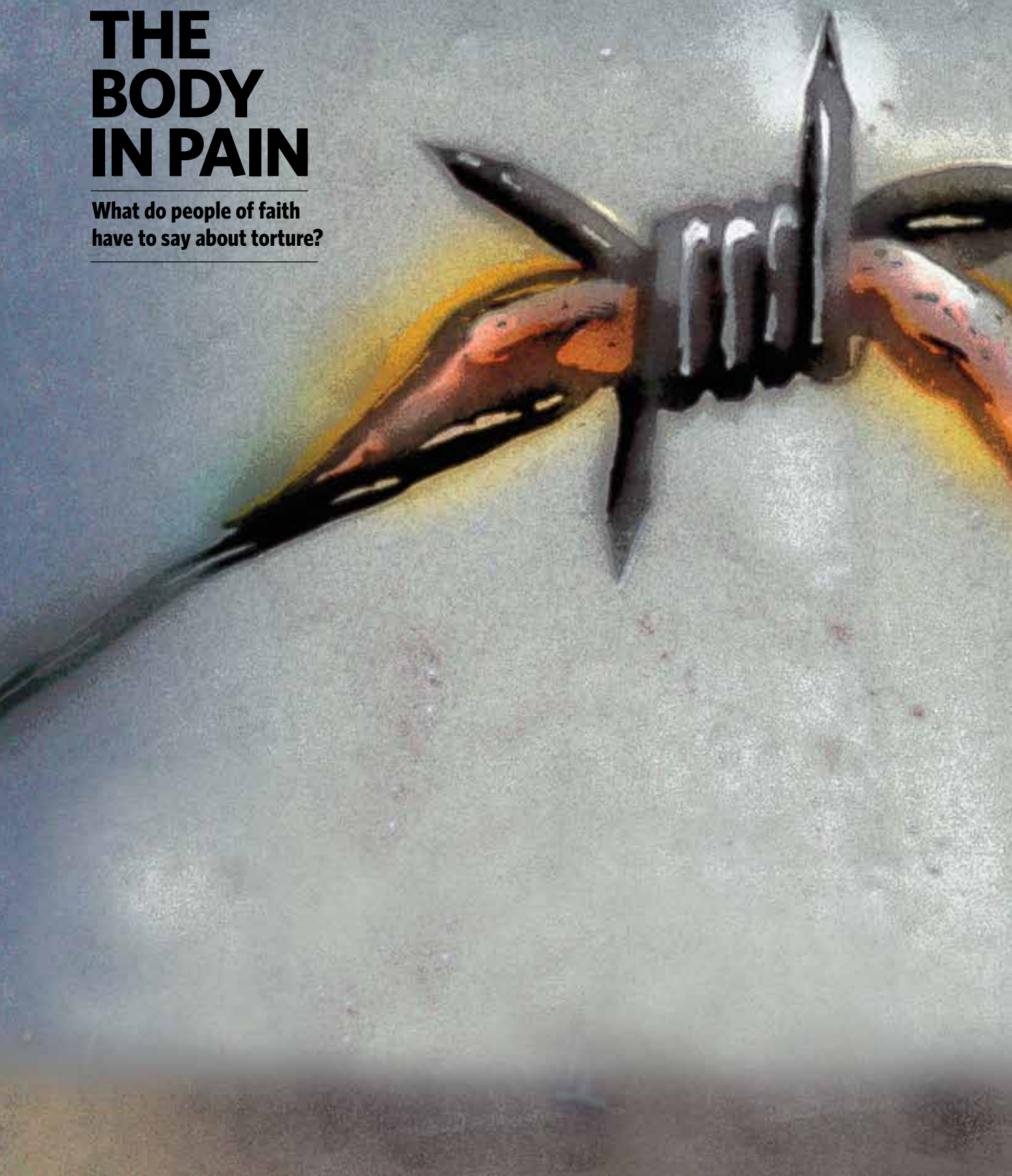
Said says she is now working on ways to leverage the website to organize a movement on the ground; she believes that Yemenis4Justice.com still holds vast potential as a tool for the justice movement in Yemen. ■

Claire Lorentzen is online editorial assistant at Sojourners.



THE BODY IN PAIN

What do people of faith
have to say about torture?





"Interventions by church leaders in this debate have been late and hesitant at best."

Todd Davidson/Getty Images

WHEN MEL GIBSON premiered *The Passion of the Christ* in 2004, pundits wondered if Hollywood seriously believed that movie-goers would pay millions to see yet another sandals-and-robos epic about the Holy Land, especially since the actors spoke in Latin, Hebrew, and reconstructed Aramaic. There were no big-name stars, special effects, or even a parallel 3-D version.

But the public loved the film, to the tune of more than \$600 million in earnings. Many were deeply moved by the story, which centers on Jesus' suffering in the hours before he is crucified.

Previewing it, critic Roger Ebert remarked on the excruciating torture Jesus undergoes. He is whipped, flayed, beaten, pierced, and denied water. "The movie is 126 minutes long, and I would guess that at least 100 of those minutes, maybe more, are concerned specifically and graphically with the details of the torture and death of Jesus. This is the most violent film I have ever seen."

WHAT IS THE contemporary definition of torture? The legal language is in Article 1 of the U.N. Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, ratified by the U. S. Senate in 1994. In plain English, torture is the intentional infliction of severe mental or physical pain or suffering by or with the consent of state authorities for a specific purpose. That purpose could be to punish, elicit information, take revenge, or simply instill fear.

According to the Denmark-based International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims, common methods of torture include "beating, electric shocks, stretching, submersion, suffocation, burns, rape, and sexual assault." Another category is psychological torture—"isolation, threats, humiliation, mock executions, mock amputations, and witnessing the torture of others"—all of which have potentially devastating consequences.

The same year that Gibson's film was released, American media published the first horrific photos from Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison. There, U.S. personnel tortured Iraqi men and women picked up in the wake of the invasion. According to the investigation by Army Major Gen. Antonio M. Taguba, U.S. personnel beat prisoners, threatened them with dogs, sexually humiliated them, and subjected them to torture sessions and mock executions. Later interviewed by *The New Yorker's* Seymour Hersh, Taguba said he described to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld "a naked detainee lying on the wet floor, handcuffed, with an interrogator shoving things up his rectum, and said, 'That's not abuse. That's torture.'" Subsequently, a handful of low-ranking soldiers were convicted of crimes such as dereliction of duty and aggravated assault, yet not a single commander or, so far, government official, faced punishment worse than demotion.

Since that time, Americans have learned that their government tortured prisoners in Guantánamo and kidnapped others who were sent to secret CIA "black sites" where they were tortured. Suspects—dozens since proven innocent—have been kidnapped abroad (or "rendered") by so-called "snatch teams" and sent to third countries such as Egypt, Jordan, and Uzbekistan, all with proven records of torture. Multiple WikiLeaks releases, including an April 2011 cache, confirm that many of the 779 men sent to Guantánamo have been tortured, including by prolonged sensory deprivation and near-drowning through water boarding.



“Torture supported by the U.S. has a long history that goes back to the U.S. involvement in Vietnam.”

FAVORING TORTURE DOES not fall on only one side of the political aisle. In 1988, President Ronald Reagan made the U.S. the 63rd nation to sign the U.N. Convention Against Torture, declaring in his statement that ratification will “clearly express United States opposition to torture, an abhorrent practice unfortunately still prevalent in the world today.” In 2004 and since, the Democrats have had no coordinated, effective strategy against torture. Instead, in the 2007 candidates’ debate Barack Obama accused Hillary Clinton of flip-flopping on the issue. Pundits concluded that the Dems didn’t want to seem “soft on terror.”

In the post-9/11 heated debate over the use of torture against suspected terrorists, Americans have been divided on the issue. In 2009, 49 percent said the use of torture under certain circumstances is “often” or “sometimes” justified, while 47 percent believe that the torture of suspected terrorists is “rarely” or “never” justified (while 85 percent of Europeans oppose it).

What do people of faith have to say about torture? Given the importance of the story of Jesus’ suffering, one might assume that most Christians would be passionately opposed. But it’s not that clear. A 2009 survey by the Pew Research Center’s Forum on Religion and Public Life found that 62 percent of white evangelical Protestants, 51 percent of white, non-Hispanic Catholics, and 46 percent of white mainline Protestants say the use of torture against terrorism suspects may “often” or “sometimes” be justified.

Others have noted that American evangelicals tend to be more conservative politically, and conservatives tend to be more tolerant of torture. In an online conversation

held on the *Washington Post*’s “On Faith” blog in 2007, Chuck Colson, an evangelical pastor and former Nixon staffer, wrote that torture might be “inconsistent with the Christian understanding of human dignity,” but “as with all moral obligations, there may be circumstances for exception.”

In a 2011 entry, *American Spectator* blogger Mark Tooley dismissed torture as merely “extreme discomfort” and cited a philosophy that affirms the “biblical understanding that God ordained the state to wield the sword in defense” of order and justice.

Christians who oppose torture are less concerned about voices like Tooley’s than they are about the deafening silence from the majority of Christian congregations. As legal scholar Jeremy Waldron noted in a 2006 *Theology Today* article, “Those of us who are actively engaged in this debate have listened for—yearned for and strained to hear—a contribution by the churches, and our impression is that interventions by church leaders in this debate have been late and hesitant at best.”

AT A MARCH 2011 conference at Duke Divinity School, people of faith opposed to torture discussed the reasons behind this silence as well as strategies that could build a moral consensus against torture among different faiths, in particular Christianity. Co-sponsored by the National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT), the North Carolina Council of Churches, and the Duke Human Rights Center, the conference included Christians, Jews, Muslims, and nonbelievers who hope that congregations can inspire their members to take a more visible stand against torture.

George Hunsinger, NRCAT’s founder

and a professor of theology at Princeton Theological Seminary, opened the conference by telling attendees about when he first saw the Abu Ghraib photos. "Torture supported by the U.S. has a long history that goes back to the U.S. involvement in Vietnam," he said. Hunsinger first became concerned about torture in 1970, after reading about the "tiger cages" used by the U.S.-backed South Vietnamese government against prisoners, including student dissidents.

Subsequently, Hunsinger joined the board of American Christians for the Abolition of Torture, which disbanded after the U.S. ratified the U.N. Convention on Torture. The Abu Ghraib photos moved him to initiate NRCAT in 2006 and to organize opposition to torture within major faith traditions. "A time comes when silence is betrayal," Hunsinger declared, quoting Martin Luther King Jr.

An early collaborator was David Gushee, a Mercer University ethicist. In 2006, Gushee published in *Christianity Today* a "distinctively Christian" defense against torture. He cited five arguments, three of them directly based on scripture. Torture violates human dignity (Genesis 1:26-28); Christians should be just, especially toward the most vulnerable, and torture is by definition unjust (Exodus 22:21-23); humans cannot be trusted, in particular when, like the torturers, they have power that can be abused (Romans 3:10-18); torture dehumanizes the torturers as well as tortured; and torture erodes the character of the nation that tortures.

Yet, Gushee acknowledged, convincing ministers to approach their flocks to oppose torture is challenging, even with young, committed seminary graduates. "Most graduates are trying to find jobs in churches, whose membership is declining," he said. "No one wants to offend their congregants about irritating issues like torture."

Some Christians would draw the line between torture, which they see as a political issue, and faith. Gushee said that when he gave a talk at a Baptist church, one attendee accused him of bringing "leftist politics" into the church. "Even the growing churches aren't interested in these conversations," Gushee reported. "They don't want to mess up a good thing and don't think it is a part of their agenda, which is one of personal

growth and finding your best life now."

Despite these challenges, Gushee insisted that Christians must argue against torture. Torture, he said, "is the most unloving thing you can do to a person. It's hateful and contemptuous and therefore contemptible."

Also in 2006, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops asserted that "any policies that permit torture and inhumane treatment are shocking and morally intolerable. Nothing less is at stake in the torture abuse crisis than the soul of our nation. What does it signify if torture is condemned in word but allowed in deed? Let America abolish torture now—without exceptions."

During the Duke conference, which included Duke Judaism scholar Kalman Bland and the university's Muslim chaplain, Abdullah Antepli, discussion focused on how opposition to torture can be grounded in holy text. Antepli was emphatic: "Anyone who tries to justify torture based on Islam is outright wrong."

Speaking as a religion scholar and rabbi, Kalman Bland noted that, in the Jewish tradition, scripture is always elusive. All religions have, he stressed, the capacity to either support or oppose torture.

Richard Cizik, an evangelical leader who described himself as a "convert" to an anti-torture stand, pointed out that Puritans tortured to death people suspected of witchcraft. Catholics used it to root out and punish suspected heretics. In majority Islamic countries such as Egypt and Turkey, torture has been routinely practiced on suspected criminals and dissidents. Though the state of Israel is secular, the country is overwhelmingly Jewish and has been accused by human rights groups of torturing Palestinians.

"We need to articulate a vision—to convince Christians to think about and see more clearly what torture really is," Cizik said, who is president of the New Evangelical Partnership for the Common Good, which opposes torture. Cizik urged Christians to accept as absolute that "the human person is sacred and made in the image of God." For Cizik, the cross and the torture Jesus endured are the essential touchstones for evangelicals. "In Jesus Christ, we see God exchanging his life for the life of his enemies. The teaching of loving your enemies makes no sense without death and resurrection. All of Christian teaching makes no sense apart from Easter

and Good Friday. We must love our enemies, not torture them."

Amy Laura Hall, a Duke Divinity professor who organized the conference, believes that white American Christians in particular need to reflect on why the language of human rights has been taken out of contemporary theology. "How did we lose the capacity to use words like equality, democracy, and solidarity?"

As the conference closed, a consensus emerged that faith or morality-based arguments will convince some, but will leave others, even the most devout, unconvinced. "Moral appeals alone won't work unless they are linked to practical arguments," among them that torture is ineffective, illegal, and can harm the torturer along with his or her victim, Gushee said.

For Hall, it's overwhelming to take on torture as a whole: "We have to be able to identify the micro-winnable battles so we don't risk losing heart against the massive Godzilla of the problem." She urged small groups of Christians to organize and educate their fellow congregants, then contact their political representatives.

NRCAT is releasing a video of interreligious leaders speaking against torture as well as faith-based study guides that frame opposition to torture. In terms of policy, NRCAT is pressing the Obama administration to pass the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture, which would establish an international inspection system, modeled on the European system, for places of detention. In addition, NRCAT supports a government-backed "Commission of Inquiry" that would examine the U.S. torture record and recommend reforms.

For Linda Gustitus, NRCAT's president, the commission is critical, since its bipartisan members would gather facts, develop recommendations, and provide Americans with a record of what was done in the mistaken effort to provide security. "This is not a partisan issue, nor is it an issue of national defense," Gustitus said. "It's a matter of our moral character and leadership. People of faith need to speak up." ■

Robin Kirk, an award-winning author and human rights activist, teaches at Duke University and is executive director of the Duke Human Rights Center.

STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND

**A former Army intelligence analyst in Iraq talks about
Bradley Manning, the weight of conscience,
and the witness of St. Paul.**

IN APRIL 2011, producers at PBS' documentary news show *Frontline* requested an interview with me in my capacity as a former U.S. Army intelligence analyst. They were filming a special called "WikiSecrets" about alleged whistleblower Bradley Manning, Army intelligence culture, and WikiLeaks. At more than one point in the process, PBS producers asked if I was absolutely sure I was ready to share information that the Pentagon had repeatedly warned me not to talk about. Was I ready to risk jail for appearing to violate the Army nondisclosure agreement that all soldiers sign?

There are very few analysts—current or former—who are willing to speak openly about their experiences in Iraq, according to the *Frontline* representatives. To defend Manning and tell the truth about the military culture of corruption, I had to dig pretty deep and be willing to risk a charge of violating the nondisclosure agreement. But this is something I did deliberately, out of conscience. According to my lawyer, I could get 10 years in federal prison just for talking about my experiences.

To the news media, those who are privileged insiders in military intelligence are valuable resources; to those in political power, the threat of transparency makes us a liability. Translators and military intelligence specialists are traumatized in unique way. While doing some of the dirtiest work in the "global war on terror," we are coerced into morally and ethically dangerous situations

At right, a "Free Bradley Manning" protester pasted a sticker on the shield of a riot police officer during a March 2011 protest in Quantico, Virginia. Above, a detainee at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq.

Evelyn Hockstein/Getty Images





Many of my friends who went to Iraq in an intelligence capacity are now dead, disabled, or imprisoned.

Bradley Manning's official military photo.

and intimidated into silence.

The untold story is that the U.S. military intelligence community is rife with trauma that few outsiders understand, a suffering kept secret by the authorities in part because of its fundamentally transformative power.

I WAS 17 when I joined the Army in 2003. I had barely graduated from high school, but had high aptitude scores—something the Army was looking for. Novelist and pop philosopher Ayn Rand had me convinced that I was justified in my choice to make a violent living using guns and computers. I was excited to mete out justice like a John Wayne cowboy or a Jack Bauer operative.

During my first week in basic training, I watched a man nearly die of pneumonia *and* heat stroke in the Missouri sun at Fort Leonard Wood. The drill sergeants ridiculed him as a “faker” when he collapsed following a strenuous forced march. He fell face first on the pavement and lay there, twitching. The drill sergeants screamed and spat in my face when I helped drag him into the shade. I remember pouring water on the man and loading him into the back of a truck. After a leisurely drive by a drill sergeant to the base hospital, I carried the man inside on my back. “It’s really bad this time,” said the doctor.

Later I asked the drill sergeant how I could trust her with my life when she almost let him die. “Private,” she told me, “if you died tonight, we’d go right on without you in the morning.”

The Army taught us well that human lives were of little consequence, that humanity itself was a concept of the weak and the broken.

BY THE TIME I was 20, I had a rifle and a top-secret security clearance. My mission in Iraq? “Win the war on terror.”

My first night at Camp Taji, north of Baghdad, I watched grizzled soldiers kick in the door to an Iraqi home and drag out a teenage boy in his underwear. I watched as they questioned him for hours, allowing him to be smacked around by an Iraqi interpreter who was probably a former neighbor of the boy. Soon I was leading my own interrogation sessions to provide fresh intelligence to my unit. I helped the command staff plan operations for bringing in more Iraqis for questioning.

I also worked as a targeting analyst compiling intelligence data for “preparation of the battlefield.” In this, I weighed the lives of my fellow human beings—military and civilian, American and Iraqi—and decided fates with the stroke of a pen. By my 21st birthday I was responsible for many deaths. In Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. military kills innocent civilians as well as armed combatants. Like the military, I never kept count of the lives I helped to end.

The Army, supported by the voting public, was happy to pack me off to play God with a gun and a laptop, inadequate training, and little guidance. I was a stranger in a strange land, unprepared for the terrible weight of moral ambiguity that my country hung around my neck and unprepared for its corrosive effect on my soul.

ANOTHER ARMY intelligence analyst—23-year-old Bradley Manning of Crescent, Oklahoma—was arrested in Iraq in May 2010 on suspicion of releasing restricted military documents to the WikiLeaks website. For outing war crimes and causing a year-long public-affairs crisis for the State and Defense departments, Manning spent nearly 10 months in maximum-security, solitary confinement at the Quantico Marine Corps base in Virginia. Stripped naked at night and forcibly sleep-deprived, his conditions were so severe that Amnesty International and the ACLU decried them as torture. In April, after international outcry, he was finally moved to Leavenworth prison where he is being held under more humane conditions.

Though several years apart, Manning and I went through the same training course at Fort Leonard Wood and the same intelligence analysis school at Fort Huachuca. We both struggled with the arbitrary and reckless military discipline. I have taken action against military abuses for reasons of conscience, and Bradley is alleged to have done so as well. I suspect that we are both riddled through with the guilty realization that we were forced to kill our fellow beings in support of indefensible policies.

By delegating to our children the power of life and death—whether directly or through the intelligence apparatus—we make them proxy agents whom we can then praise as heroes or write off as “bad apples,” depending on the direction of the political

wind at any given moment.

ACCORDING TO NEWS reports, Manning had a transformative conscientious awakening when he found himself responsible for the unjust imprisonment of 15 Iraqi activists. When he determined that the pamphlets they were distributing were not “terrorist tracts,” but instead highlighted corruption in the al-Maliki government, Manning took the information directly to his commanding officer. “He didn’t want to hear any of it,” he reportedly wrote. “He told me to shut up and explain how we could assist the [Iraqi Federal Police] in finding more detainees.”

Manning also allegedly discovered classified footage taken from Army Apache helicopters during a 2007 air-to-ground attack near Baghdad that killed two Reuters correspondents and at least 10 others, and wounded two children. Manning’s arrest came after he allegedly took responsibility for the 2010 release of what came to be called the “Collateral Murder” video.

If the government’s claims about Manning’s actions are true, then I believe he acted in disobedience against what he perceived to be an unjust and immoral authority. It’s also clear that his pre-trial punishment was intentionally symbolic, as well as inhumane; it was a warning to the many other would-be whistleblowers and abused soldiers.

The U.S. military classifies virtually everything in war as an official state secret. All soldiers must sign nondisclosure agreements upon return from overseas duties. In effect, this outlaws any dialogue about the wars. It silences the most direct criticisms from the participants of the wars themselves. It also creates a despondent and dehumanizing loneliness in veterans, who are unable to share their experiences.

Many of my friends who went to Iraq in an intelligence capacity are now dead, disabled, imprisoned like Manning, or AWOL and fleeing imprisonment. I acted on my conscience only later, after leaving the Army, and more cautiously. As one of the few intelligence veterans bearing public witness to conscience, I feel it’s now my turn to speak out on behalf of truth and justice. To be honest, I’m scared. The prospect of absolute idleness and gradual emotional rot

in prison terrifies me. But I cannot “stand idly by” (Leviticus 19:16) while my friends suffer for their acts of conscience.

ST. PAUL IS perhaps the greatest of all ex-intelligence professionals. Having spent years as “Saul” hunting down and eliminating Christians, he was called by Christ, quite literally, to quit his violence. The most unlikely of apostles, Saul became the greatest proponent of Christ’s peace. Beaten by scourges, bloodied and shackled, facing certain death, Paul gazed out at the world with compassion, secure in the knowledge and faith of the living God of justice.

Through the conversion of Saul, Christ sends us a clear and relevant message: It is precisely those soldiers with dark and heavy hearts, whose consciences have turned, who will lay down their weapons and take up the cross. Christ is also telling us that the real moral authorities are not political or military leaders but rather the formerly dejected and the radically transformed. Though nations wantonly continue to send their precious sons and daughters off to kill—and then ignore, jail, and often destroy those sons and daughters who finally object to the violence—Christ’s peace also rises in the hearts of these weary ones.

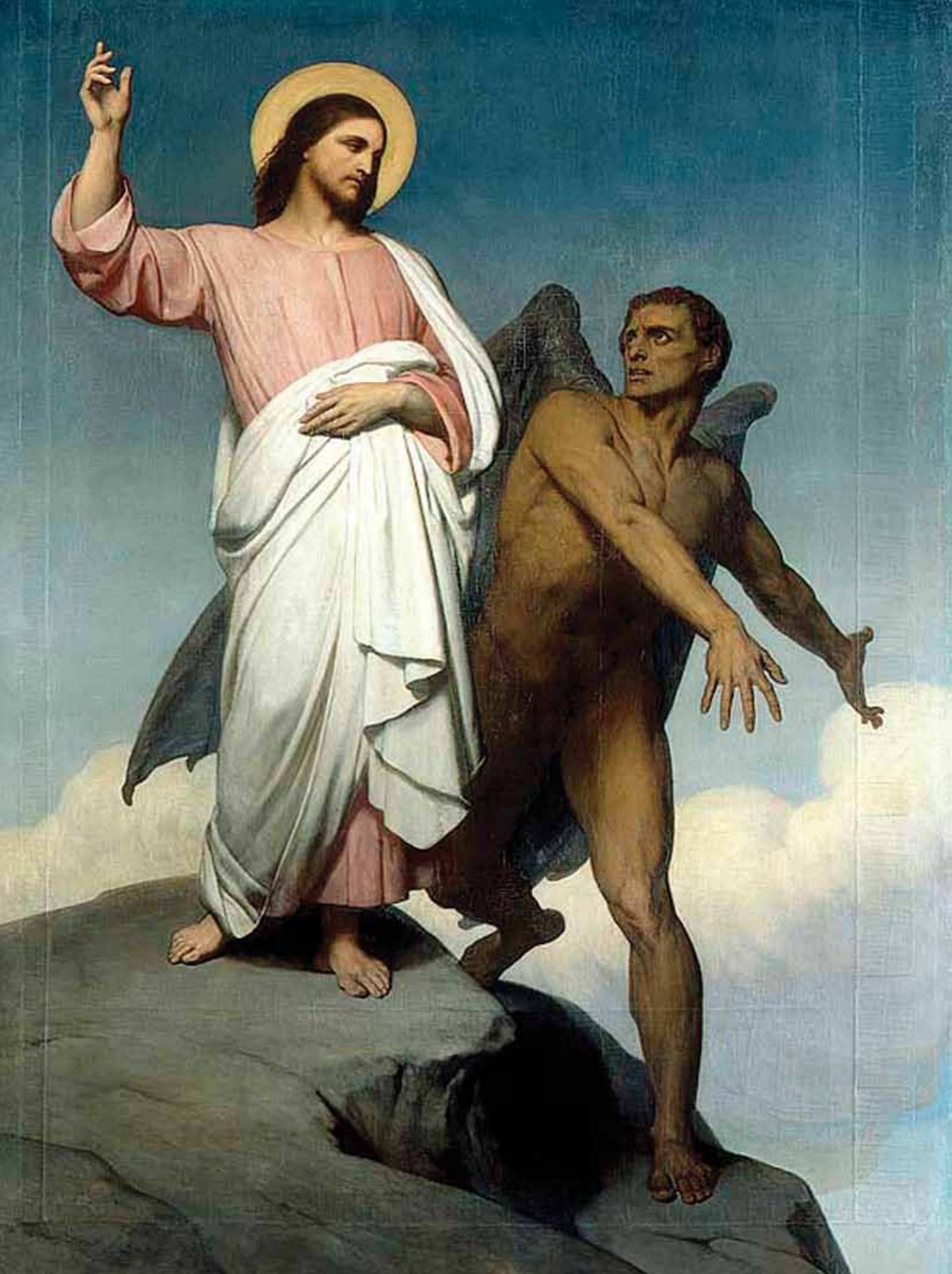
To discover the peace of God inside us is within the power of all, believers or not. This is something that we can witness in the Bradley Mannings, the AWOL soldiers, the conscientious objectors, and the Sauls of the world—those agents of mindless death who are put on the path to redemption by simple acts of conscience.

In my congregation we pray the Lenten prayer, like Peter at the Last Supper: “Humbly allow that we may follow [Christ] to the cross.” But, also like Peter, it is a rare and bitterly noteworthy moment when we finally comprehend the enormity of this request.

In the meantime, I wonder, is it possible to stand with Christ the condemned, Christ the tortured, Christ the detainee, Christ the inmate, and Christ the traitor? The only answer I’ve found is to stand with all the accused, tortured, and detained. How else can we be worthy of our salvation? ■

Evan Knappenberger is a disabled Iraq war veteran, a student, and a community peace activist living in Bellingham, Washington.

“Private,” she told me,
“if you died tonight,
we’d go right on without
you in the morning.”



TEMPTATION IN THE CONSUMER WILDERNESS

What Matthew 4 has to say to the age of climate change.

IN JESUS' TEMPTATION in the wilderness, the devil asks Jesus to convert stones into bread, to leap from a pinnacle, and to worship him. Living with this gospel story has inspired me to reflect on humanity's role in climate change. As a Christian and a historian of technology, I've realized that each of Jesus' temptations can reverberate for all of us living in the age of fossil fuels—because there is a powerful analogy between those three temptations and the temptations humanity faces in using those fuels.

In Matthew 4 we read that the devil first tempted Jesus by saying, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." Jesus refused, but we have, in a sense, taken the devil up on the offer: "Petroleum" means "rock oil"—and in our American agricultural system we now burn about 10 calories in fossil fuel for every calorie of food we produce and deliver to the supermarket.

Such inefficiency is far from the system of food production that God created. On the third day, according to the Genesis account,

God created plants; on the fifth day, birds and fish; and on the sixth day, humans. All animals, including humans, depend for their livelihoods on the solar energy photosynthesized by plants into stored chemical energy.

With the conversion to coal during the Industrial Revolution, people learned how to tap into a vast savings account of chemical energy in plant and animal tissue that the Earth had accumulated from the sun, across geological time, in the form of fossil fuels. In the 20th century, we substituted gasoline-powered tractors for the muscle power of horses, and then after World War II drew upon the resources of the petrochemical industry to produce the pesticides, herbicides, and artificial fertilizers that have radically reshaped farming practices. (Rolf Peter Sieferle's *The Subterranean Forest* is a great place to learn more about the energy transitions during the Industrial Revolution, when humans shifted from forests to underground coal for fuel.)

Although God created a sustainable system for providing all animals, including humans, with the energy we need from the sun, we are now clearly engaged in



"Temptation of Christ," Ary Scheffer (1795-1858)

Getty Images



Each year we inject into the atmosphere an amount of carbon that it took the Earth more than 500,000 years to sequester.

unsustainable practices. As food journalist Michael Pollan writes, “When we eat from the industrial-food system, we are eating oil and spewing greenhouse gases.” We are turning stone into bread.

When tempted by the devil to turn stones into bread, Jesus responded, “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

NEXT, THE DEVIL took Jesus to the top of a pinnacle on the temple and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down,” indicating that Jesus could rely on God’s angels to bear him up.

In a November 2010 editorial, *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman echoed this image by asserting that denying human-caused climate change—that is, denying that all of the carbon we are injecting into the atmosphere will have severe consequences for the global climate—is like jumping off an 80-story building and believing one can fly. We now have accurate scientific data about the overall concentrations of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere through the distant past, and about how much it has risen since 1950. For hundreds of thousands of years, prior to the Industrial Revolution, carbon dioxide concentration fluctuated between about 180 and 280 parts per million (ppm), and those fluctuations corresponded to average global temperatures. It is now about 390 ppm, and rising as humanity’s consumption of fossil fuels continues to increase. We know that average global temperatures are going up. And we know that glaciers and the polar ice caps are melting at alarming rates.

Each year we now inject into the atmosphere, through the burning of fossil fuels, an amount of carbon that it took the Earth more than 500,000 years to sequester. Each time that much carbon was taken out of circulation, millions of years ago, the Earth’s ecosystems had 500,000 years to adapt. Now we are reversing the process by putting that much carbon back into

circulation each year.

We also know the consequences of climate change will be devastating. Sea levels will continue to rise due to melting ice, inundating heavily populated coastal areas. As climate zones shift, many species will be unable to adapt as human-made barriers block their migration. Current weather patterns conducive to farming will be disrupted. Yet we have so far failed to make meaningful changes in the ways we do things.

Jesus responded to the temptation of throwing himself off the pinnacle by saying, “Do not put the Lord your God to the test.” We’re acting as if we believe we can fly, or as if God’s angels will somehow bear us up in the coming calamity. We are putting God to the test.



FINALLY, THE devil took Jesus up a mountain, showed him all the world’s kingdoms and their splendors, and said, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” As we worship the golden calf of consumption, we have succumbed to a similar temptation. We gaze covetously at the splendors Madison Avenue sets before us, and we burn fossil fuels so we can indulge our desires. Certainly this is bowing to the devil. When the rest of the world sees the splendors we in North America have provided for ourselves, those nations also bow down, burning fossil fuels in expectation of possessing the splendors we have.

For thousands of years, since the time known as the Neolithic Revolution, humanity has, through agricultural toil, devised ever more complex ways to manipulate nature. Through cultivation and the domestication of plants and animals, humans have increased the resources that a given area of land can yield from the sun’s energy to satisfy human needs and build thriving societies. We need not overly sentimentalize the hard work involved to appreciate that in the past—before the widespread use of fossil fuels—human efforts to carve livelihoods out of the environment were often sustainable.

In contrast, humanity crossing into the era

of fossil fuels was like a farmer who worked hard through his life, living on what he could produce, until one year he discovered a distant ancestor's vast savings hidden beneath the floorboards of the house. He began to tailor his living habits to drawing from this inheritance. We are the descendents of that farmer—people who have known no life other than living off savings. Even though we now realize that the hoard will soon be depleted, few people seem to remember how to live within sustainable means.

Jesus had the wisdom and strength to resist the devil's temptations, responding, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'" We, having succumbed to the three temptations Jesus faced, must learn how to turn from our habits of converting stones into bread, believing we can jump off tall buildings and expect God to save us, and worshipping our own desires for self-aggrandizement.

Disavowing our use of fossil fuels is a daunting calling, because ours is a complex world, and we have cast our practices into concrete—the energy extraction, transmission, and consumption infrastructures we have built on the landscape. It will take us decades to replace our present fossil-fuel infrastructure, even when and if the nations of the world begin to make a concerted effort to do so. Yet we can start to make a difference with every fraction of fossil fuels reduction we achieve, whether by insulating our dwellings, setting the winter thermostat lower, buying locally and sustainably grown food, living near where we work and shop, or advocating for urban and suburban developments in which our home, work, and community lives once again take place nearer to each other. The total of all those fractions can be truly significant; sustainable-energy advocates call this the "wedge approach."

With many small changes added together and helping to build support for much-needed changes in the infrastructure of our communities and in nations' public policies, we can begin to resist temptation and address the calamity we face. ■

Fredric L. Quivik is a historian of technology at Michigan Technological University and a member of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Houghton, Michigan.

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REDISCOVERING JESUS

Love, justice, and the radical challenge raised by the untamed Christ.

WHEN I WAS 4 years old my mother asked me what I would do about Jesus. More than six decades later, I'm still asking myself that same question. What does it mean to say that my life will be defined by his?

In seventh grade, when I was leaving in the morning to walk to Lincoln Junior High School, my mom would pray with me each day at the front door: "Dear Father, help Wes today to put Jesus first, others second, and himself last."

It's a prayer I've often dissected, and never forgotten. The various paths I've traveled since then are ways that I've wandered and searched

institutions in our day is to resurrect who Jesus is. We need to hear anew the call of what it means to be a disciple of his in this time and place. And then we must create and nurture communities of those who are claimed by this call and are willing to follow, traveling to unexpected destinations anticipated only by God's providence.

Frequently people ask me if there's a future for denominations, or specifically for the Reformed Church in America. Every decade or so a new crop of speakers and consultants discover that denominational leaders will actually pay them a lot of money to come speak at church conferences about the demise and death of denominations. The best answer I ever heard to this question came from H. George Anderson, when he was presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. "People ask me if denominations will survive," he said, "and I say, have you ever tried to close a single church?"

Denominations, in one form or another, will endure. That's certain. The real question is whether they will do things that are useful and good. To do so will require their transformation. Their purpose and structure will be realigned around equipping congregations for their missional calling, rather than functioning as regulatory agencies and benefit services providers.

This will depend on recovering a radical sense of what it means to follow Jesus, and then creating structures that connect, strengthen, and resource communities of disciples called to participate in God's mission. The question

Following this Jesus leads us to the frontiers of world Christianity.

to discover what to do about Jesus. The evangelical subculture in which I was raised was infiltrated by pernicious racism, captured by right-wing nationalism, absorbed with rampant materialism, and defended by haughty self-righteousness. But it taught me to ask the right question. What about Jesus?

Early in my journey, my responses to that question began to challenge my subculture's answers. The ensuing dialogue, however, echoed my mother's prayer: What does it mean to put Jesus first? Our problem is that we have domesticated Jesus and lost the radical challenge that question poses.

The central task of North American congregations, denominations, and Christian

Photo by Firoze Shakir



isn't, "What about denominations?" It's "What about Jesus?"

My journey to resurrect the person of Jesus was helped by the pilgrimage I took a couple of years ago to where he lived, died, and rose. It was no ordinary Holy Land tour, but rather a deep exposure, through hours of hiking, reflecting, and praying, to the places that shaped Jesus' life. This was interwoven with the biblical narrative and the historical realities happening in that land today.

It turns out, for instance, that Nazareth at the time of Jesus was a town of only a few hundred people, and Jews had settled there as part of a movement to establish their presence and culture in this area. So it was not unlike Jewish settlements today on the West Bank.

I always wondered why the people of Nazareth wanted to push Jesus off a cliff after his inaugural sermon in Luke 4. There I learned it was, most likely, because of his references at the end of that passage of how God had blessed, healed, and used non-Jews for his purposes. Jesus was condemning the narrow nationalistic and ethnic exclusivity of his hometown, and the people became furious. That made it clearer to me where a follower of Jesus should be led in our current debates around immigration, and our perpetual appeals to nationalistic pride.

I sat at the pools of Bethesda recounted in John 5. The lame and the invalids were there, hoping for healing, because they were refused entrance into the temple. And Jesus chose this route to the temple to make a point about the worthy sons and daughters of Abraham who were being excluded from fellowship and worship because of cultural prejudices and, most likely, a poor interpretation of a scriptural text.

Such epiphanies were revealed throughout those days in Israel and Palestine. They reawakened a hunger within me to know the life of Jesus of Nazareth in order to follow him more faithfully as my Lord and Savior. To decide what to do about Jesus, we don't need to know a theological formula; rather, we need to know about Jesus.

This simple but radical call to follow Jesus gets beyond the last half-century of Protestant warfare between evangelical and ecumenical worlds, or the gospel of conversion versus the social gospel. This dichotomy has been widely decried, yet some institutions on each side still find it in their fund-raising interests to perpetuate this false conflict.

Personally, I have no time for those building a new form of fortress Christianity, attaching a

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right-wing political ideology to new expressions of biblicism, and highlighting hot-button issues like homosexuality. Ironically, the essential failure of these folks is that they ignore Jesus of Nazareth. Likewise, I am disillusioned by seminaries whose fascination with textual criticism and academic prowess replaces the simplistic faith of their students too often with cynicism, or even no faith, rather than a mature attachment to the person of Christ.

What excites me in seminaries, parachurch movements, campus ministries, and congregations is a fresh fascination with Jesus, as a radical servant leader of a transformational movement, embodying the fullness of God's love. In other words, God incarnate. I see those in a younger generation drawn to this authentic presentation of Jesus and challenged to live as his disciples, knowing that this means working for God's justice in the world. This also means learning the spiritual practices that create the space in one's life for the work of God's Spirit to transform our inner being. The old dichotomies are left behind as we decide what to do about Jesus.

Following this Jesus leads us to the frontiers of world Christianity. For those of us in North America, being his disciple beckons us to look beyond the framework of our national and cultural life. So much of the peculiar baggage we carry from American culture obscures the startling challenge that comes from saying Jesus is Lord. It's the nonWestern world today that is witnessing the explosive power of the gospel and the expansive growth of the church. In some of those settings, putting Jesus first leads to persecution or even martyrdom. But in those crucibles of discipleship we catch unique and holy glimpses of the resurrected power of Jesus.

Enriched by the privilege of listening to the stories of Christians from around the world, my journey continues as I ask what to do about Jesus. I don't know when I was born again—whether at 4, or 24, or both of those times and many more. All that is safely in God's hands.

What I do know is that the gospel took on flesh. In each of our lives, grace tries to intrude continually, attempting to shape our story into an infinitesimal but uniquely valuable part of God's story. God can certainly do very well without any one of us. That's a message that the Reformed heritage has proclaimed with vigor. But God also delights in each one of us. When we ask what to do about Jesus, we are invited into an inner, transformative journey that allows the unique combination of DNA that shapes our being to be joined with foundational movement of God's love. This seeks to shape the world into the home of God's glory. And for any one of us, that is a story worth telling. ■

Wesley Granberg-Michaelson is general secretary of the Reformed Church in America. Adapted with permission from Unexpected Destinations: An Evangelical Pilgrimage to World Christianity, by Wesley Granberg-Michaelson © 2011, all rights reserved, Wm. B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI.

Edict

*The purpose of poetry is to remind us
how difficult it is to remain just one person,
for our house is open, there are no keys in the doors,
and invisible guests come in and out at will.*
—Czeslaw Milosz, “Ars Poetica?”

I used to smell the wet maples, the leathery
green primers, saturated with cursive drops
of cloudburst, a lesson in penmanship after every
cleansing rain and as that sated sensation

hovered one mid-afternoon between conscious
thought and oblivion an angel approached
barefoot on the windowsill and stood toes
dripping with sap like medicine. He

said the only way to meet them all
is to patch the hole through which the
mosquitoes enter and the only way to
block that entrance is to re-write the edict

that's been degraded by recent radioactive
leaks in Japan. He went on, get your energy
elsewhere, photosynthesis maybe. I
said, I'm a mystery to anyone on that coastline, but

would like to know them if there's time. Then we
broke off communication—I from my end by preaching
a sermon and he from his end by converting
to Dadaism. Now nothing is ever really moist and

every tree's ambivalent about growth in a downpour
although many might interpret leaves as they fall.
King Cyrus issued the last legal declaration yet
there's no use hearing it unless debris cooperates.

*Scott Kinder-Pyle is a Presbyterian pastor in Spokane,
Washington.*



CultureWatch

BOOKS ART MUSIC FILM

By Jason Howard

WHERE HER HEART IS

Humanitarian, award-winning actress, and best-selling author Ashley Judd reflects on her faith and “true calling”—social justice activism.

IT'S NOON ON the West Coast, and Ashley Judd is scurrying to make a live on-air interview with a National Public Radio local affiliate in Berkeley. Her voice sounds surprisingly energetic despite her frenetic schedule of late—seven cities in nine days—to promote her recently released memoir, *All That Is Bitter and Sweet*.

The book is the first lengthy writing venture for the 43-year-old Judd, an actress best known for her roles in films such as *Someone Like You* and *Where the Heart Is*. But lest you dismiss this as yet another celebrity vanity project, consider the subject: A chronicle of her shift in focus from movies to what she calls her “true calling,” feminist social justice activism, the memoir details her on-the-ground experiences in the slums, brothels, and hospices of 13 countries.

Confessions of an Heiress this ain't. Part Anne Lamott, part United Nations briefing paper, the book also recounts Judd's faith journey or, as she describes it, her path to standing “autonomously with the God of my understanding.” After being released in early April to critical acclaim, *All That Is Bitter and Sweet* quickly

Kris Connor/Getty Image

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 Danny Duncan Collum on
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 Brittany Shoot on *Digital Jesus*

Actress and activist Ashley Judd
 speaks against mountaintop-
 removal coal mining at the
 National Press Club in
 Washington, D.C.

That relationship was kindled at a young age, she says, and reinforced in a nighttime conversation she had as a sixth grader with her mother, country music singer Naomi Judd. Overwhelmed by a misunderstanding with a friend, she turned to her mother for advice. "She posed a question," Judd recalls. "She said, 'Well, what's the Golden Rule?' And in that split second I couldn't

"Although I loved the creative process, the furious need for social justice still percolated under the surface."

remember it. I think I was so stunned by her question. And she gave me an enigmatic smile and said, 'Oh, you do know it,' and left me to figure it out for myself." She pauses. "And sure enough, not long after she left the room, I reconnected internally with the Golden Rule."

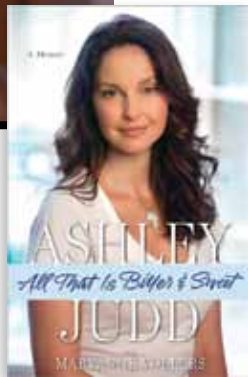
She describes that realization as a "pivotal moment" in her burgeoning spirituality. "She was reminding me that I have an internal wisdom and that the answers are inside of me, and that those answers come from my connection with a power greater than myself."

Judd has carried that realization with her throughout her life, she says, and credits it with shepherding her through a difficult childhood in which she was sexually abused and

often felt "invisible and invalidated" by her family.

Out of those experiences, Judd developed a strong bond with the oppressed, which she more clearly identified as a teenager upon seeing the 1984 Emmy Award-winning TV movie *The Dollmaker*. The film, starring Jane Fonda, tells the story of a displaced Appalachian woman fighting for her independence inside her own home during the 1940s. Based on a beloved book by fellow Kentuckian Harriette Arnow, the

Continued on Page 41



vaulted to number five on the *New York Times* bestseller list for hardcover nonfiction.

"Stunned," she tweeted when she learned the news, a word that could also describe the reaction of Judd's many fans and some in the media when she largely abandoned her successful film career in the mid-2000s to devote much of her time to social activism. The book promises to put her new life in better perspective.

"It's [been] a way for me to memorialize the sacred narratives from around the world with which I've been trusted," Judd told *Sojourners* of chronicling her global experiences on the page, "to celebrate the grassroots programs I work with, as well as to process my own feelings and to continue to engage with my Creator."

New & Noteworthy



GLORY AND POWER

The film *Rejoice and Shout* tells gospel music's story from the plantation era to contemporary times. Interviews include Smokey Robinson, Andraé Crouch, and Mavis Staples. Abundant performance footage includes rare clips of artists such as Sister Rosetta Tharpe. Limited theatrical release begins June 3. Magnolia Pictures

WHAT IS SOCIAL JUSTICE?

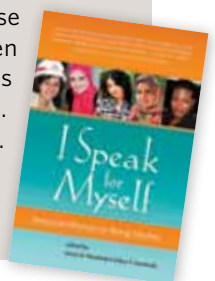
William Droel's 39-page booklet by this title is a must-read (and must-distribute) for all Christians living the call to social justice. In simple, clear language, Droel defines social justice, connects it to other Christian virtues, discusses moral ambiguity, and explains the principles of social justice organizing. ACTA Publications

A NOVEL PHENOMENON

In the film *Hey, Boo: Harper Lee and To Kill a Mockingbird*, director Mary McDonagh Murphy explores the historical context and lasting power of one of the 20th century's most popular and influential novels. In limited theatrical release; available on DVD in late July. First Run Features

VOICES OF GRACE AND STRENGTH

In *I Speak for Myself: American Women on Being Muslim*, 40 diverse women under 40 write about their faith, families, and culture. Glimpse into real lives too often obscured by stereotypes and false assumptions. Edited by Maria M. Ebrahimji and Zahra T. Suratwala. White Cloud Press



The Ayn Rand Makeover

I HAVE AN old friend who identifies his political orientation as “rational conservative.” I can see why he insists on the modifier. These days being a hardcore, unmodified conservative keeps getting more difficult.

It's no longer enough simply to believe that private initiatives are better than government ones or that traditional cultural practices are usually better than their modern challengers. For the past decade, the true conservative has also been required to believe that the melting of polar ice is a benign natural phenomenon and that the notion that the Earth is only 6,000 years old deserves to be called science. In the last two years, the credulity bar got higher and aspiring conservatives had to believe it was at least possible that the election of President Obama was the result of a conspir-



Jodi Hilton/The New York Times

The mainstreaming of Rand is, in large part, the work of one man (and his money).

acy, hatched 50 years ago, to place a Kenyan-born African socialist in America's White House.

But life just got even harder for our friends on the Right. Now, apparently, a true conservative must also believe that the late Ayn Rand was a great philosopher.

Anyone who has so far managed to avoid Rand's work or her disciples should know that in her novels and essays Rand expounded a worldview, dubbed “Objectivism,” that can be summed up as a pastiche of free-market libertarianism and cartoon Nietzscheanism. To the Randian, there is no God but self, and self-will and pursuit of self-interest is the only virtue.

From her death in 1982 until the rise of the tea parties in 2009, Rand's star was eclipsed on the Right by the

strength of religious conservatism, but not anymore. Posters bearing Rand's image are a staple at tea party rallies. Rep. Paul Ryan, author of the House Republican budget plan, says Rand inspired him to enter politics. A film version of Rand's magnum opus, *Atlas Shrugged*, was released on April 15 this year. After decades in Hollywood development limbo, the film (optimistically subtitled *Part 1*) was rushed into production last year by right-wing businessman John Aglialoro, who poured in millions of his own dollars to make it happen.

But there's nothing new about Rand's presence at the edges of the entertainment world. She was mostly a pop-culture figure in her own lifetime. She started as a screenwriter. In 1949, her earliest best-selling novel, *The Fountainhead*, became a big Hollywood movie, with Gary Cooper and Patricia Neal. Rand herself wrote the script. In the ensuing period that spanned the careers of Joe McCarthy and Barry Goldwater and saw the rise of Ronald Reagan, Rand, an émigré from Bolshevik Russia, cast a large shadow over the fanatically anti-communist Right.

What's new in today's Randophilia is the claim that her philosophy constitutes a serious intellectual contribution to the history of Western thought. This mainstreaming of Rand is,

in large part, the work of one man, John Allison IV, recently retired CEO of the giant national bank BB&T. Allison is a dyed-in-the-wool Objectivist who required his top managers to read *Atlas Shrugged* as a condition of employment. Now, through the BB&T Foundation, he has rained down millions in grant money upon 25 colleges and universities with the condition that money be used to support business courses in which works by Ayn Rand are required reading. Schools ranging from Marshall University and the University of Louisville to the University of Texas-Austin, Duke, and even Quaker-founded Guilford College have gladly taken the money and drunk the Objectivist Kool-Aid.

If you think the rampant amorality and speculative excess that characterized financial markets pre-2008 was bad, just wait until a new Rand-indoctrinated generation of businesspeople hits the scene, convinced not only that greed is good, but that it is the only good. ■

Danny Duncan Collum, a Sojourners contributing writer, teaches writing at Kentucky State University in Frankfort, Kentucky. His novel *White Boy* was recently published by Apprentice House.



Continued from Page 39

film resonated with Judd on a variety of levels.

"It's so much about her reality of not being validated," she says. "It engaged all my emotions in the same way that my feminist social justice work engages my emotions today. There was outrage and indignation, deep pain and grief, profound empathy and identification. There was this sense that this injustice could either paralyze me or it could galvanize me to action. And every day for the rest of my life I would have to make a choice between the two."

Her preference became evident during her college years at the University of Kentucky, where she writes that her "undeclared major was rabble-rousing," leading

"My Christian faith demands I work for social justice and human rights."

demonstrations against the university's financial links to apartheid in South Africa as well as a campus-wide student walkout over a trustee's use of racist language.

After college, Judd seriously considered joining the Peace Corps, but moved instead to Hollywood to pursue an acting career. Success quickly followed with her role on the television series *Sisters* and a critically acclaimed turn in the independent film *Ruby in Paradise*. But what most endeared her to mainstream audiences were her portrayals of fierce women in blockbusters such as *Kiss the Girls* and *Double Jeopardy*. By 2001, she was one of Hollywood's higher paid actresses, commanding a reported \$4 million for her performance in *Someone Like You*. But Judd also felt increasingly spiritually unfulfilled.

"Although I loved the creative process and those fleeting, magical moments of acting," she writes in her memoir, "the righteous indignation, the furious need for social justice, still percolated under the surface." When a representative from Population Services International (PSI)—a nongovernmental organization that focuses on reproductive health, malaria prevention, and HIV/AIDS—offered her the position of global ambassador, she signed up.



From *Submarine*

CLAIMING OUR POWER

A FUNNY THING happened at the Nashville Film Festival in April—one of the most welcoming, community-oriented festivals in the U.S., where it's easy to slip into conversations with Hal Holbrook, Kris Kristofferson, or Susan Sarandon in between mouthfuls of barbecue and Jack Daniel's. And then there are the films—a vast range from around the world, a huge music film selection, and unexpected masterpieces that you might not see anywhere else.

The funny thing was that I was transported back to the grey Northern Irish skyline of my childhood by a film set across the water in Wales, but in a secondary school setting so resonant with my own that it might as well have been filmed in my classroom. In *Submarine*, we follow Oliver, a 15-year-old boy, on a convincing journey of discovery that's a delight to watch. It's like Wes Anderson's *Rushmore* directed by a working-class Woody Allen after reading Kierkegaard. Oliver's discoveries, on the surface, are typical—love, fear, himself. But it's the discovery of his own power, and what he can do to others, for their good or ill, that marks *Submarine* out as one of the year's smartest films.

Project Nim, from the team that made the exhilarating documentary *Man on Wire*, about Philippe Petit's astonishing high-wire walk between the Twin Towers, is another story of human risk-taking in 1970s New York. This time we follow scientists as they attempt to raise

a chimpanzee to develop human language skills. The tragic consequences of not following through raise serious questions about responsibility for others, care for the Earth, and underestimating the power of being human. This makes *Project Nim* a pretty decent companion piece to *Submarine*, taking in, as both do, the nature (and limits) of our potential.

Limits are stretched by the protagonist of **Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives**, the Thai film honored with the Cannes Film Festival's top prize last year. It's a remarkable visual depiction of a gentle man looking back on his life, experiencing regret for his involvement in violence, and hoping for a "good death," in which he can love and be loved. It's a rare wonder, prepared to reveal awe where our minds have previously been trained to adopt cynicism.

All three of these films are worth your time, because they reveal something profound: Each of us is the same—we have similar hopes, we make similar mistakes, we have similar loves. And one of our most important tasks is to figure out what to do with our own power. Because the worst thing you can do with power is to deny that you have it. ■

Gareth Higgins, a Sojourners contributing editor, is executive director of the Wild Goose Festival. Originally from Northern Ireland, he lives in Carrboro, North Carolina.

Excerpt

THE ART OF DYING

One man searches for balance between family and solitude, nature and technology, art and activism.

I HAVE BEEN dead for a long time when I finally catch the delicate scent of my carnation—just a trace, just for a second. A pigeon coos as it struts along the edge of my sheet. Then a little girl—one of the children of the temporarily dead—starts giggling about something. Her clicking shoes skip through the odd labyrinth of flower-adorned bodies.

I'm not sure why I came to this demonstration. I need to go grocery shopping and I have stacks of papers to grade. What motivated me? Guilt? Yes, partly. The

belief I'm making a difference? No. I don't think so. The hope that this theater of the absurd will help alleviate the suffering of the Iraqi people? No, not really. It's less noble, less clear. I'm just trying to learn how to believe in something, how to see in the dark.

From Cabin Fever: A Suburban Father's Search for the Wild, by Tom Montgomery Fate. Reprinted with permission from Beacon Press. Copyright 2011. All rights reserved.



Lisa Haufschild

The American Friends Service Committee sponsored a die-in at Chicago's Federal Plaza on Sept. 21, 2007, to draw attention to the Iraqi victims of the Iraq War.

Judd's first international trip with PSI was to Cambodia in 2004, where she toured orphanages and brothels and met with government officials. More countries have followed, including India, Thailand, Rwanda, and Kenya; more slums, refugee camps, and hospices, summits with political leaders and community activists, and public demonstrations on how to properly use condoms and malaria nets.

Closer to home, Judd has also become a vocal opponent of mountaintop-removal mining, a radical form of strip mining that has destroyed more than 500 mountains and nearly 2,000 miles of headwater streams in her native Appalachia. Ever the student, she grad-

Judd's memoir details her on-the-ground experiences in the slums, brothels, and hospices of 13 countries.

uated from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government in 2010 with a mid-career master's in public administration to complement her humanitarian work.

Her re-engagement with the social activism of her youth changed her profoundly, shattering a long-held belief that she had to choose between a creative and service-oriented life, an idea that Judd writes is reinforced by many in the media who "believe I can legitimately be only one or the other, a creative person or an advocate. ... They can't hold in their minds that perhaps I am both—a serious actor ... and a serious advocate who is profoundly committed to pursuing social justice and human rights at home and abroad."

The rejection of that artificial choice has contributed to her spiritual wholeness. "My Christian faith demands I work for social justice and human rights," she writes. "Jesus has always been my favorite radical."

Judd is emotional when she talks of experiencing God's presence among the prostitutes, refugees, and diseased people she encounters in her work. "It's in touch and physical connection," she says. "It's in the eyes kisses, if you will, that I have with other people—that shared humanity that



Above, Ashley Judd in India with an AIDS awareness campaign; below, at a mountaintop-removal protest in West Virginia.

passes between us and transcends language and culture.”

But try as she might, Judd finds it impossible at times to reconcile the idea of a just God with one who permits the suffering she has witnessed to persist. In a poignant letter she wrote during a visit to the Congo, she rages at God with language as fiery as any character she has portrayed onscreen: “These are your children ... I think you and your big plan absolutely suck. I think allowing vulnerable, defenseless children to be gang raped and thrown away, illiterate and unable to prevent and treat disease, is beyond a bad idea. The notion you are a God of justice is a savage lie.”

When asked about the letter, reprinted in her book, Judd sighs long and deep, before quietly admitting that she continues to struggle with this paradox. “If I get *out* of this moment, no, it’s not reconcilable. And that’s where my sense of impotence, hopelessness, and despair kicks in. But if I can stay *in* the moment, then I have a better chance of staying grounded in my faith.”

The key, she says, is remaining open to redefining her Creator. “I believe in the God behind my God behind my God,” she explains. “I think that I just have so many

layers of misunderstanding that I’m willing to fire my God at any particular moment because I have every confidence that the Spirit will re-emerge and show me the loving face of God again.”

Judd is putting the spiritual balance she has won over the past few years into practice. This fall, she will make a much-anticipated return to television, playing a former CIA agent who travels to Europe in search of her missing son in the ABC series *Missing*. Her family film *Dolphin Tale*, co-starring Morgan Freeman and Harry Connick Jr., will debut in theaters in September.

Still, she makes it clear that she will continue her activism. “I can read at work, keep up with policy papers and research, and stay connected with my dynamic community of activists,” she says. “I will keep on keeping on.” ■

Jason Howard is the co-author of *Something’s Rising: Appalachians Fighting Mountaintop Removal*. His features, essays, and reviews have appeared in *The Nation*, *Equal Justice Magazine*, *No Depression*, *Paste*, and *The Louisville Review*, and his commentary has been featured on NPR.



Reviewed by Lauren F. Winner

GOOD INTENTIONS GONE **BAD**

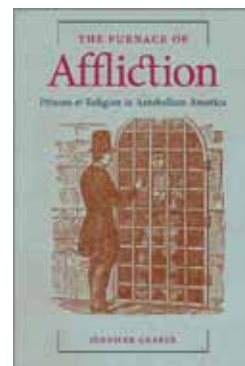
The Furnace of Affliction: Prison and Religion in Antebellum America, by Jennifer Graber. UNC Press.

IN A COMPELLING new study, historian Jennifer Graber investigates Protestantism’s involvement in America’s penal system in the first half of the 19th century. Her sobering conclusion is that the well-meaning Christians who were involved in prison reform contributed to the creation of a penal culture that “not only allowed but actually demanded” corporal punishment and inmates’ suffering.

Graber argues that many Protestant prison activists, including the nation’s first prison chaplains, believed that prison should

aim to reform prisoners, not simply punish them. But there wasn’t agreement about how to achieve prisoner reformation. Quaker Thomas Eddy, who ran New York’s Newgate prison from 1797 to 1804, tried to offer inmates, in Graber’s phrase, “a completely positive experience.” He forbade corporal punishment, and provided prisoners with healthy meals, a clean environment, and “wholesome activities.” Even solitary confinement, which was meted out only to Newgate’s most obstinate inmates, was, in Eddy’s eyes, not so much a punishment as an opportunity for transformation: In the silence of solitary, prisoners would finally be able to hear the Inner Light to which, Quakers believed, all people had access. In other words, Quakerism’s generous theological anthropology underwrote a penal practice that many 21st century human rights activists (including the American Friends Service Committee) classify as torture.

Compared with some antebellum Protestant prison activists, Eddy was on the side of angels. Other Protestants—though still committed to the idea that prison should be reformatory, not only punitive—crafted what Graber calls a “theology of



redemptive suffering.” Drawing on Isaiah 48:10, Protestants such as Newgate chaplain John Stanford insisted that the prison should be a “furnace of affliction” that, through “state-imposed physical and psychological pain,” would bring about the redemption of prisoners. Many Protestants, Graber shows, either tacitly approved of or actively embraced corporal punishment (which became ever more central to prison discipline during the antebellum era). While Protestant prison workers “did not intend ... to support inmate torture,” their theology of redemptive suffering provided torture with a religious rationale.

It is this complicity with physical violence that, in Graber’s account, most forcefully illustrates Protestant collusion with the penal system. Her argument could be extended to a concomitant development in American prisons: the rise of contractual penal servitude; that is, the arrangement whereby private companies hired dirt-cheap prison labor from the state, and turned a tidy profit. This practice was written into the Constitution as the one stated exception to the 13th Amendment prohibition of involuntary servitude. (The definitive account of American penal servitude is found in Rebecca M. McLennan’s *The Crisis of Imprisonment*.) Protestant prison activists who believed labor to be crucial to prisoner rehabilitation were thus implicated not only

Their theology of redemptive suffering provided a religious rationale for inmate torture.

in physical brutality, but also in the rise of industrial capitalism and the perpetuation of involuntary servitude in a nation ostensibly devoted to freedom.

Graber argues that just as Protestants shaped prisons, prisons in turn shaped Protestantism. In order to secure influence in the prisons, Christians were willing to set aside some of their denominational specificity. The Christianity that state agents allowed in prisons would not, in the end, be characterized by the salty particularities of, say, Quakerism or Methodism. It would instead

be a generic faith in which “the redeemed life [consisted of] common morality and hard work.” Protestantism itself was thus reformed in the fires of the furnace of affliction.

The Furnace of Affliction is written primarily for a scholarly audience, but it tells a story that all Christians involved in prison work should consider. It is one thing to look back to the 1820s and see how church people lent the respectability of religion to state-sponsored violence. It is harder, but perhaps more urgent, to ask about our own complicity in the American penal

system. *The Furnace of Affliction* is not just an important work of religious and penal history; it may also be a mirror that allows non-incarcerated Christians working in prisons today to notice that our efforts to follow Jesus to jail (and to seek justice for some of America’s most marginalized citizens) may, perversely, abet a coercive and brutal institution. ■

Lauren F. Winner teaches at Duke Divinity School and, through Durham’s Project TURN, the Raleigh Correctional Center for Women.

Reviewed by Brittany Shoot

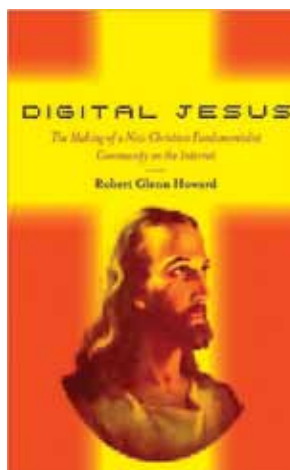
A BELIEVERS’ WEB

Digital Jesus: The Making of a New Christian Fundamentalist Community on the Internet, by Robert Glenn Howard. New York University Press.

WRITING A SUCCINCT but comprehensive ethnographic account of early online Christian communities is a daunting task, but Robert Glenn Howard manages to pull it off with his hefty overview. He focuses on Internet evangelism and how some traditionalists have found it an unsatisfying substitute for brick-and-mortar churches, even as it has inspired multitudes of other individual believers and sparked communities that are like-minded but geographically disconnected.

In *Digital Jesus*, Howard introduces readers to a lively cast of characters, including retired physicist Lambert Dolphin and online evangelist and writer Marilyn Agee. Though both lived in California and built two of the first Christian web communities, they were unaffiliated, yet connected as early as 1999 by thousands of believers who treated them as part of the same spiritual web. To explain their notability, Howard compares these virtual crusaders to early Christian evangelists such as D.L. Moody, nonordained leaders who feel called to minister. He explores how Agee, who believed God had given her access to divine knowledge, interpreted the events of Sept. 11, 2001, for her community, which at that time numbered in the thousands.

Generally speaking, much of Howard’s analysis focuses on how the Internet has



enabled groups of disparate believers to prosper. He traces the rise of specific online Christian resources with an emphasis on the tools used by individual groups. For example, early Usenet newsgroups, virtual forums that act as public bulletin boards, were diverse spaces in which fundamentalist language was not welcomed. Instead, he found that only as the Internet became an increasingly common way to find like-minded believers was there enough

interest to make viable forum-based communities on sites such as BibleForums.org, MyChurch.org, and even RaptureForums.com. Though some web-based communities have since abandoned forums and migrated to networked blogs, some of the most robust faith-based virtual communities have held tight to technologies that offer discursive deliberation space. Anyone who has spent more than 10 minutes reading a thread on Facebook or trying to follow replies on Twitter knows that sometimes only an online salon will do.

According to Howard, it’s worth noting that homogeneous online spaces are not always a good thing. Christian communication enclaves can protect members from offensive comments by banning outsiders, but avoiding other worldviews altogether

Continued on Page 46

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"Our role as Christians is to be active for justice and bring Jesus' message of hope and love...it is my role in this global village to act against the injustice."

— Naomi Graber, junior, Elkhart, Ind.

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Sojourners hosts an annual internship program of voluntary service for education, ministry, and discipleship. For more information about the 2012-13 year, visit www.sojo.net. Applications are due March 1, 2012.

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Andrew Simpson,
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Claire Lorentzen, online editorial;
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Betsy Shirley, editorial;
Hannah Lythe,
policy and outreach.



Heather Wilson

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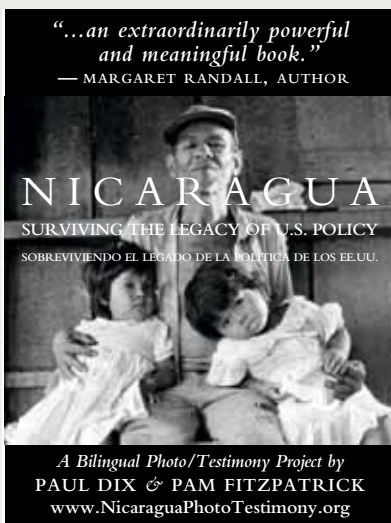
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CultureWatch

BOOKS ART MUSIC FILM

Continued from Page 44

can lead to insular spaces rife with prejudice against other faiths, difficult viewpoints, and healthy debate. Similarly, he traces the growing rift between the need to express individual authority and engage others in debate and the proliferation of the participatory web.

Most poignant, Howard points to the Internet's power to disseminate and keep alive predictions about the Rapture. He

Some Christians have moved away from formal institutionalized religion toward a virtual *ekklesia*.

doesn't pass judgment on the trend, but he does spend considerable time poring over virtual Christian apocalypticism, detailing how it has influenced a modern revival of end-times prophecies and storytelling. Even beyond Howard's scope, this ideological renaissance is apparent in the popularity of Tim LaHaye's *Left Behind* series, films like *The Road* and *The Book of Eli*, and even in more marginal popular culture and academic studies, such as Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek's most recent tome, *Living in the End Times*.

Howard concludes that believers have an increased responsibility for the nature of their religiosity when they're able to construct their spiritual worldview from the multitude of perspectives online. In a time when faith can be and is so easily customized, personal ideology is increasingly constructed beyond the confines of traditional religious institutions and with a more voluntary, independent approach to spiritual seeking.

Ethnography can be a cumbersome genre, and though at times *Digital Jesus* is a dense, academic read, it offers insight into the ways some Christians have moved away from formal institutionalized religion toward a virtual *ekklesia*, or online worship and fellowship space. Some have found space to prepare for the Rapture, and others have simply found community beyond the four walls of their local church. ■

Brittany Shoot is a writer based in Boston and Copenhagen.



Comedians
Bud Abbott and
Lou Costello.

Getty Images

Trigger Words

HOW MANY POTENTIALLY helpful conversations get derailed by evoking reactions that have nothing to do with the issue at hand? Whether dealing with personal or cultural issues, we would do well to be aware of how we can unintentionally incite those with whom we want to build relationships.

Some readers may be old enough to remember the comedy duo Abbott and Costello. In one really funny bit, Lou Costello is locked in a jail cell with someone whose personal his-

story evokes surprising explosions. In their objective sense, they are merely descriptive. But they have been redefined as terms of threats instead of just nouns or normal parts of reality.

"Socialism" becomes not just an economic system that is different from "capitalism"; it becomes a trigger word that represents a threat or an inaccurate description of any economic aid, and thus it provokes an attack. "Immigration" has become not just a part of our melting-pot history and an integral need for a healthy economy; it has now been turned into a red-flag word that evokes an image of evil outsiders trying to take what is "ours." And interreligious cooperation (especially with Muslims)

for the common good? Watch out!

Recently, our metropolitan area of Orlando put on an event to network different faith communities to "go green" for the preservation of the Earth and ultimately to the benefit of the vulnerable. In materials for the event, which was sponsored by the city in cooperation with the EPA, my name appeared, without my knowing it, under a quote from the Quran. Indeed, I was so oblivious to the effect it would have on some evangelical pastors, I sent it around to my network. The response from

several was like saying "Niagara Falls" to the crazy guy. I got accused of everything from turning my back on Christ to taking God out of the classroom! I am used to attack, but I am learning a lesson.

I do not believe any evangelical pastor would want to harm creation on purpose or the poor who depend upon it. And, of course, if I had designed the postcard the quote would have been from Genesis 2:15. But we all must be mindful of the atmosphere of immediate counter-attack to perceived threats.

Can we ever get to the place where we can be reasonable, even charitable in our interpretations? I believe we can. But first you and I will need to remember to defuse a potential reaction by avoiding trigger words or phrases as much as possible. We can do that best not by being paranoid, but by using values we have in common with the suspicious. We need to use phrases such as "out of obedience to our scripture" and "not polluting" and "caring for the vulnerable who live off the land." If our goal is cooperation for practical good, the ones who have the most charitable and commonly accepted terms will have to lead. ■



Dr. Joel C. Hunter is senior pastor of Northland Church in Orlando, Florida.

I got accused of everything from turning my back on Christ to taking God out of the classroom!

His wife ran off with another man and ended up at Niagara Falls. So every time someone says "Niagara Falls," the man relives the bad association and attacks the one who said the trigger phrase. "Niagara Falls!" the man shouts, "Slowly I turned, step by step I came to him, and I struck him ..." and at this point the man begins to beat on Costello until regaining his composure. But every time Costello forgets and says "Niagara Falls," he gets another beating.

We live in a culture where perfectly normal words pull a trigger for misunderstanding and overreaction.

God's Care Package is Bursting

IT SEEMS AS if now, as much as ever, we could use reminders of God's faithfulness, compassion, and care. Our world is fraught with brutal responses to uprisings across the Middle East and North and West Africa. One natural disaster follows another. Countless lives are lost and others ruined. It is fitting to ask ourselves how God's light will shine in this darkness. Who will bring comfort when all seems lost? During this season of Pentecost, we turn to God the comforter, who rescues us from our distress, from our own wretchedness, and from the wickedness that prevails in a broken world.

We turn to a God who gives life and nurtures growth in abundance. God's provision and care come with gracious and merciful generosity. Yes, suffering is par for the course in this life, but those who choose to follow the path of life will be called to new growth and also to new deaths along the way. To live by the Spirit requires death to the things that do not lead to life.

The scripture passages this month point to a God who calls us to new life, who keeps God's promises to be with us, whose love is steadfast, whose presence is rampant, who enters intimately into our midst in ways that can only baffle, surprise, and humble us. This God brings us to our knees in prayer, praise, and hopeful expectation.



Enuma Okoro, of Durham, North Carolina, is the author of Reluctant Pilgrim and co-author of Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals.

[JULY 3]

Foolish Faithfulness

Genesis 24:34-38, 42-49, 58-67; Psalm 145:8-14; Romans 7:15-25; Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

CRIES AND PRAYERS are surely still rising from Libya, Ivory Coast, and Japan. People have lost their homes, loved ones, and livelihoods. The raging political storms that follow a natural disaster leave more pain and sorrow in their wake. Even as relief efforts continue, where can people turn for comfort in the midst of such suffering?

Genesis 24 begins with the witness of divine covenant. The servant tells us that God was faithful to Abraham, who trusted blindly. Barren Sarah had her promised son. God richly blessed Abraham, and now Abraham's servant is trusting God to provide a suitable helpmate to provide comfort and companionship to Isaac. The God of compassion answers those who call, even if it's not exactly the way that we planned. The psalmist (145:11) tells that holy comfort comes with power and provision to enable us, especially when we cannot assist ourselves. God meets us at our wits' end (145:14).

Divine mercy and grace always exceed our understanding and expectation. As Paul

testifies in Romans, God rescues us not only from the seeming hopelessness of external circumstances, but also blessedly from the hopelessness that arises from internal conflict within our human nature. Matthew 11:16-19 shows it is part of our sinful nature to foolishly and repeatedly reject the unending comfort God offers us in Christ Jesus. And the Matthean invitation of Jesus (11:25-30) shows that it is part of God's foolish love to repeatedly reach out to us in holy compassion, faithfulness, and mercy.

[JULY 10]

Life and Death

Genesis 25:19-34; Psalm 65:1-13; Romans 8:1-11; Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

THE GOD OF comfort is also the God of life. We are all caught up in the cycle of life and death. We are all making daily choices to live either by the Spirit that gives life or by the flesh that tends to keep us self-absorbed,

personally or nationally. Esau (Genesis 25) sold his future for immediate gratification. What parts of our future are we willing to sell for immediate gratification in our own lives, personally, nationally, and globally? What we do today with our money, our children, our neighbors, and our policies will determine on what kind of soil the seed of God has fallen in our lives (Matthew 13). How can we encourage one another to walk by the spirit of Christ that dwells in us and enables us to do what we by ourselves cannot do? What in us must fully die in order for new life to flourish?

To live by the Spirit, we turn toward the source of abundant life, the God who brings double fruit out of barren circumstances (Genesis 25:21-22). Both the Genesis text and the psalm reveal that God does answer prayer. God speaks into the life-and-death circumstance of our natural, physical world and into our spiritual lives. The God of creation is in the business of tending to the soil beds of our lives like a skilled gardener who knows when to sow, prune, weed, cut, and harvest. God also knows how to bring new, rich, and unexpected life out of lifeless situations.

[JULY 17]

We Are Not Alone

Genesis 28:10-19; Psalm 86:11-17; Romans 8:12-25; Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

THOUGH LIVING BY the Spirit, we are still called to be in the world. Our faith takes root in the people and circumstances of God's earthly creation. God is present with us in this place, just as God was present with Jacob as he left Beersheba. The famous ladder dream highlights two key characteristics of the God we serve. God keeps God's promises, and God descends to meet us wherever we are, wherever we need God. Like David in Psalm 86, we can turn to God to hear us, preserve us, deliver us, teach us, strengthen us, and comfort us. Matthew 13 points to God's active awareness of the things of this world. In our present time of deep strain on the environment, on families with unemployed providers, on families with sons and daughters still fighting a war, here is a word from the Lord: We are not alone. Evil does not win.

Paul reminds us in Romans 8 that suffering can be expected, even anticipated. That is not newsworthy. What is worth telling is that God is already showing up in the midst of the struggle. God offers signs to those to those who have the faith and hope to hear and see, without seeing everything. God appears in the Spirit and in the very presence of Christ. The hard reality is that redemption is a work in progress. But the beautiful part of that reality is that God in Jesus Christ has steeped God's self so intimately into suffering that we need not go beyond it. God descends beyond the point to which we are capable of going. Ours is a God of comfort, of mercy, a God who takes on flesh to put a cap on human suffering.

[JULY 24]

Exceeding Generosity

**Genesis 29:15-28; Psalm 119:129-136;
Romans 8:26-39; Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52**

ROMANS 8:31-32 is an apt place to begin. God is with us. God is for us. When we reach the end of our words and of our own reaching, God-in-Spirit intercedes for us and God-in-Christ redeems us to fulfill God's purposes. Will we ever get used to the fact that God's desires for us will always exceed our desires for ourselves? The very nature of God is one of abundance, fruitfulness, and exceeding generosity. It is written throughout scripture and marked in God's incarnate body, and it plays out in the fruitfulness of creation and the giftedness of our own lives. Even when life seems to play us a dirty hand or when we maneuver ourselves into our own corners, God is still in the business of unraveling new gifts out of less-than-benevolent circumstances.

In Genesis, Jacob is tricked out of his initial choice of a wife. Instead he gets two wives. Jesus descends from Leah's line. Rachel's progeny will save both Egypt and Israel in times of famine. Abundance. Fruitfulness. Exceeding generosity. Perhaps finding the blessing in our circumstances entails seeing with new, redeemed eyes.

The psalmist rejoices in the blessings and life found in God's precepts. We are

easily dulled by the presumption that we know what God has to say to us and what we should say to God. The word of God is the great gift that keeps on giving if we are patient and faithful in our pursuit of God. Yes, the word of God is Christ, the pearl of great price. But those who mine the scriptures for wisdom and knowledge are like the scribe in Matthew 13:52, one who encounters the living word and repeatedly reaps new life from God's planted seed.

[JULY 31]

A Fighting Posture?

**Genesis 32:22-31; Psalm 145:8-9, 14-21;
Romans 9:1-5; Matthew 14:13-21**

LEFT TO OUR own devices, we often choose death over life, manipulation over cooperation, violence over nonviolent striving, and turning away from instead of toward God. This is the human condition. God reaches for us to nurture us and draw us closer to divine life, where each person has enough, where provision multiplies, and blessings go full circle throughout creation. But, like Jacob in Genesis, we often assume fighting postures before God when God's grace might bless us without our struggle and without our wounding. Like Israel in Romans, we often reject the plethora and the fullness of God's gifts. Like the disciples in Matthew, we often assume scarcity where there is holy abundance. We look in the wrong places for what will sustain us and we fail to believe that God equips us with the tools to provide for and nourish one another.

But, thanks be to God. The psalmist rightly proclaims that the creator, sustainer, provider, comforter, and savior is good to all. "The Lord is just in all his ways and kind in all his doings" (Psalm 145:17). God does not want to fight or strive with us. God does not call us to wrestle our blessings from God's open hand. God generously offers, generously blesses, generously provides, and loves exceedingly beyond what we are even capable of receiving this side of redemption. ■

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Judgment Day 2.0

WHEW! THAT WAS close. Looks like May 21 passed without incident, despite being the date that millions—okay, dozens—of Christians believed would be the day of the Rapture, their last Saturday on this Earth. It's possible God got busy on the weekend and forgot the prophecy that Christian broadcaster Harold Camping has been preaching for years. On the other hand, the large billboards that Camping's Family Radio Network put up around Nashville, Tennessee, should have reminded the Almighty—on God's occasional drives across Interstate 40—to double check the apocalyptic calendar.

Camping made news in 1994 when he and his followers staged a highly-publicized Rapture event,



judgment, and I figured a little trim might take the sting out of a wasted life. “You have sinned many times, my son. But I like the sideburns.”

I also briefly considered renting a limo to drive Jesus around in, fig-

for example, I still keep my knees bent and my legs slightly apart so I can make the play at either first or second. I also frequently chant “hey-battabatta” during quieter moments in the discussion.) Plus, listing my appearance in the all-star game beefs up my “accomplishments” section that otherwise only listed “used to speak a little French,” which doesn’t strike the valedictory tone one aims for in a successful résumé.

ASIDE FROM Camping’s updated prophecies, the majority of Judgment Day predictions—including those from early Mayan evangelicals—still place the start of the End Times in 2012, a more reasonable assertion that fulfills the principal rule of all predictions: It hasn’t happened yet, so who are *you* to say it won’t? But if Newt Gingrich somehow wins the nomination for president, I’ll set aside my skepticism, pack an overnight bag, and follow any Rapture-spouting preacher to the closest abandoned drive-in (for easier pick-up).

And when I’m standing before the Almighty, I’ll try to remember to look humble and stay calm, especially if a Mayan walks over and says, “Told you so.” ■

Ed Spivey Jr. is art director of Sojourners.

Eventually, a Rapture prediction will come true, right?

gathering to wait for the heavenly hosts to lift them off to heaven, after getting clearance from air traffic control (to avoid mid-air collision with other ascending believers). But the group eventually dispersed because, well, Jesus didn’t make it. He could’ve been busy, or maybe got tied up in traffic. One never knows.

Camping later admitted he had made a miscalculation—hey, *you* try to get this stuff right every time!—but now claims to have developed a new method of determining the Last Day, one that uses an elaborate mathematical system to decipher clues hidden in the Bible. (Bible math is not an area with which I’m familiar, which probably explains why I blew that section on my SATs.)

And—no foolin’ this time—Camping discovered the actual date of Jesus’ return is May 21.

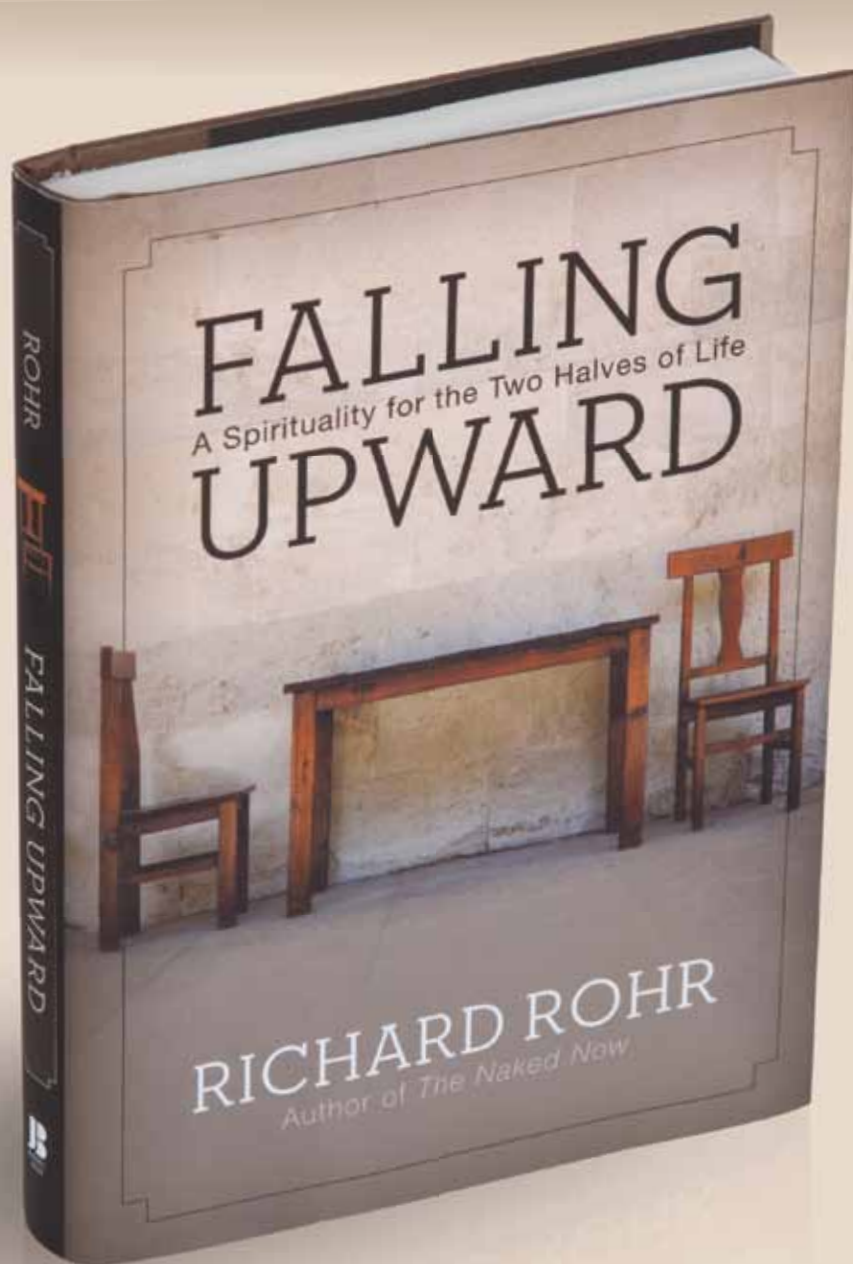
Which is why I got a haircut on May 20.

You want to look your best when Jesus comes back and renders

uring his interest in Palm Sunday donkeys might have waned in the preceding two millennia. Jesus knows how to communicate in a cultural context, so what better way to re-establish authority in the 21st century than in a stretch Hummer? (“Help yourself to the minibar, Sir, because I’ve got my hands full up here with this traffic. Some of these cars don’t appear to have drivers!”)

More important, I updated my résumé, in case Jesus had any afterlife assignments for me. (If I can’t actually earn my way into heaven, I was hoping to do work-study for awhile.) Unfortunately, having the same job for almost 37 years means my entire career fits on only one page, not including cover letter. So I bumped it to a second page by elaborating on my long and distinguished Little League baseball career, between the ages of 11 and 12. (And why not? The life lessons learned in Little League have stayed with me for decades. In our weekly editorial meetings,

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